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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO THEIR SCHOOLING

BY

LARRY A. ETHIER

C

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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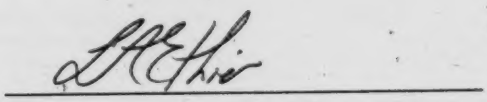

5357-37 Avenue

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Dated Oct. 3. 1991

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled High School Students' Attitudes About The Significance Of Extracurricular Activities To Their Schooling submitted by Larry A. Ethier in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

W. G. Maynes
Dr. Bill Maynes Supervisor

Ken Ward
Dr. Ken Ward

L. Beauchamp
Dr. Larry Beauchamp

Date: Sept. 24/91

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to gain an understanding of high school students' attitudes about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling. The participants for the study included grade 10 and 12 students enrolled in two mid-sized central Alberta composite high schools. A questionnaire survey was distributed to all the grade 10 and 12 students in both schools in order to establish the degree to which students were involved in extracurricular activities. Thirty-eight students were then interviewed. They ranged from having no extracurricular involvement to being very involved in school sponsored activities. They were asked to share their feelings and perceptions about extracurricular activities in their respective high schools.

Most students believed participants in extracurricular activities experienced a sense of personal satisfaction which may have resulted from several different sources. These included the opportunity to explore personal interests, enhance their learning experiences, enjoy the activity, develop new relationships, receive personal gain, feel good about themselves, and create memories of their high school days. However, although students appreciated the several advantages associated with extracurricular participation, they didn't always take part in these activities. Several factors which inhibited student involvement were identified. These included increased academic demands, the personal commitment expected for the activity, peer influence, low level of self-concept, financial concerns, and involvement in out-of-school activities. Students seemed to wrestle with these conflicting factors before making final decisions about extracurricular involvement.

Students also suggested that the school, as a collective unit of students and staff, reaped many benefits from the presence of extracurricular activities

in their schools. These benefits included alleviating boredom, creating a positive school identity and enhancing student-teacher rapport. They believed that extracurricular programs contributed to their schools' positive ethos.

Finally, the study indicated that whether students were involved or not in extracurricular activities, they experienced a general feeling of regret that they hadn't become involved (or more involved) when the opportunity was available.

This report raises issues and offers recommendations useful to high school administrators as they make decisions about extracurricular programming in their schools.

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CHAPTER I

Overview and Purpose of the Study

Among North American schools, there is a well established tradition of providing a variety of extracurricular activities to complement academic programming. Cockriel (1987, p.3) described the genesis of their tradition:

> Extra-class activities and student organizations surfaced in colleges and universities as early as the mid-eighteenth century and by the 1920's there was a great proliferation of student activities prominent on most campuses.

Soon thereafter, extracurricular programming began to appear at the high school level. Schools were extending their services to areas not directly related to academic needs. Competitive sporting teams, debating clubs and student associations led this influx of extracurricular activity. Over the years, the scope of these offerings has changed drastically. Gholsan and Buser (1983, p.v) noted:

> Since the early 1900s schools have modified and expanded their programs. ... Today it is common for schools to offer band, chorus, student publications, drama, and physical education-related experiences. ... Furthermore, it is not uncommon for students to be involved in school or community service, educational tours, leadership training activities, and cultural-language studies abroad.

Today, in a typical mid-sized (800-1000 students) high school, one could expect to find upwards of twenty different activities available to students. As Goodlad (1984, pp. 35-39) has demonstrated, schools are now expected to do so. He wrote that the stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, believe that the school serves more than solely academic needs. Scholars such as Holland and Andre (1987, p.447) argued that extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities to develop both socially and intellectually.

They found (p.447) that "participation in extracurricular activities, including both athletic and nonathletic activities, is positively correlated with desirable personality/social characteristics." Reflection upon my personal schooling, where, in the early 1960's, it appeared to me that schools had become a central focus in the social lives of many high school students and, as a consequence, students were satisfied with their schools reinforced this belief. Extracurricular activities seemed to play a pivotal role in establishing this school culture. Recently, Glanfield (1989, p.111) noted that "those high school students who did participate in school-related extracurricular activities were significantly more satisfied with school overall and with school experiences." Vroom (1964, p.99) stated that "job satisfaction and job attitudes are typically used interchangeably" and "positive attitudes toward the job are conceptually equivalent to job satisfaction" (as cited in Glanfield, p. 1). Research on student attitudes tends to proceed with similar assumptions.

What is it about extracurricular participation that makes school more satisfying? Epstein and McPartland (1976, pp.27-28) stated:

> Student reactions to school are indicators of the quality of school life. Positive reactions to school may increase the likelihood that students will stay in school, develop lasting commitment to learning, and use the institution to advantage. At least, higher satisfaction with school, greater commitment and more positive student-teacher relationships mean more enjoyable and stimulating hours spent in the compulsory school setting.

Sergiovanni (1984, p.9) offered a possible explanation when he wrote "as persons become members of this [a school's] strong and binding culture, they are provided with the opportunities for enjoying a special sense of personal importance and significance."

However, lately there appears to have been a shift in student attitudes regarding the role of the school in relation to the importance of extracurricular

activities. In a study of a large urban high school, Boyer (1985) reported being told :

> At 2:15 [dismissal time] life quickly changes here. Depending on the student, three different things happen. One quarter of them remain at school, either for sports or clubs or performance groups; almost half of the students go to part-time jobs; the remainder go home or take off with friends.

In a more current study of three Northern Alberta high schools, Glanfield (1989, p.63) found that only 50 percent of the student populations participated in extracurricular activities, and that only approximately 10 percent of the student population was involved in three or more extra-class programs. This study seemed to reflect what was happening in the United States in 1985, where Boyer noted that:

> Nationwide, 53 percent of all students do *not* participate in any nonvarsity sport or athletic activity; 85 percent do *not* belong to pep clubs or take part in cheer leading, debating, or drama; more than 80 percent do *not* participate in either student government or the school newspaper; and over 78 percent are *not* members of chorus or dance, or band or orchestra activities.

Given the positive educational consequences associated with participation in extracurricular activities, the evidence which suggests that student involvement may be diminishing raises issues worthy of study. Have students' attitudes changed with respect to the role of extracurricular participation? This question, and my personal feelings on the role of extracurricular programs and their influence on the overall school culture, provided the motivation for this study.

Purpose of the Study

Considering the apparent benefits of extracurricular participation it might be anticipated that most students would enthusiastically become involved in

these activities. The objective of this study was to investigate the degree of student participation in high school extracurricular activities and in so doing, enrich our current understanding of student attitudes about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling. Six questions guided the inquiry:

1. What are the reasons for high school students' involvement or lack of involvement in extracurricular activities?
2. Why are or why are not extracurricular activities important to students?
3. How do extracurricular activities contribute to the culture (behavioral norms, assumptions, philosophies and beliefs) of a school?
4. In what ways does involvement in extracurricular activities affect students' relationships with teachers?
5. In what ways does the involvement in extracurricular activities affect students' attitudes about attending school?
6. Do attitudes about participation in extracurricular activities change from grade 10 to grade 12?

Significance of the Study

The results of the study should be of particular interest to principals, superintendents and school board members. As student attitudes are revealed, principals and district office personnel may become more knowledgeable about the role of extracurricular activities in their schools. In turn, this may assist them in making critical decisions about extracurricular offerings in their schools or school districts -- from both the perspective of financial considerations and also the degree of importance extracurricular programs should have in their schools. For example, the study revealed that only a very small portion of students felt that extracurricular programs are not beneficial to either themselves or their school; therefore, administrators could

bring this evidence to bear on their deliberations as to whether or to what extent they ought to offer and fund these activities.

From a theoretical perspective, the study provides a broader information base for the understanding of extracurricular activities. Specifically, it adds to the limited studies of student views on extracurricular participation as well as provides a basis for further studies in the area of extracurricular programs and their roles in (a) establishing a school's culture, (b) providing incentives for students to stay in school, and (c) student personal development.

The study also provides insights into the stresses high school students feel in todays "high pressure" society. This may provide a foundation for the further investigation of high school student stress.

Definition of Terms

1. Extracurricular Activities: These include competitive school sports, intramural activities, academic extensions like science or debate clubs, music, drama, special assemblies, and social activities such as student associations, yearbook, clubs or peer support teams. The terms co-curricular, extra class, and out-of-class will be used synonymously with extracurricular.
2. High School: A school offering grade 10, grade 11 and grade 12 programs is deemed a high school.
3. Participant: Any student taking part in a minimum of one extracurricular activity is considered a participant.
4. Nonparticipant: Any student not partaking of any extracurricular activities is considered a nonparticipant.

Delimitations

The study has the following delimitations applied to it:

1. The participants were students currently registered in one of two mid-sized, rural central Alberta high schools.
2. The study was conducted in only two selected high schools.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to the study:

1. The study was limited by the extent to which students may reply openly and honestly.
2. The study may have been influenced by the participants' prior knowledge of the interviewer, as he has had extensive involvement in the coaching and the organization of sporting activities in central Alberta.
3. The interviewees were students who volunteered to participate in the study when approached by the administration .

Assumptions

The following assumptions underlie this study:

1. Students were able to accurately express the significance of extracurricular activities to themselves and their school.
2. A school's culture is influenced, in part, by extracurricular activities.
3. The participants of this study were adequate and representative enough to draw conclusions regarding the significance of extracurricular activities to students and school culture.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter presented the background, rationale, purpose and significance of the study. Specific terms were defined for the context of the study. Delimitations, limitations and assumptions of the study were also identified. Chapter II contains a review of relevant literature. A focus of that chapter is on possible reasons why students should choose to become involved in extracurricular activities. The methods and procedures used to carry out the study are discussed in Chapter III. After the data is analyzed and discussed in chapter IV, they are reflected on in Chapter V. Chapter V also provides ideas for further research along with implications for practicing high school administrators.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Through the 1900s, there has been growth in extracurricular offerings in secondary schools. Accompanying this growth has been an interest in the roles that these activities play in the education of high school students. Early research tended to focus on college students since extracurricular activities seemed more prevalent at this level. However, in the past 10 years, a marked increase in research of extracurricular involvement of students at the secondary level has taken place. It should be noted that the majority of this research on extracurricular participation has concentrated on the roles played by extracurricular activities in fostering students' personal development as well as in establishing school cultures. The results have produced a general agreement that involvement in extracurricular activities is good for students and good for the entire school ethos. A matrix summarizing several scholars' findings about student involvement in extracurricular activities is presented in appendix A.

But, even with the abundance of proclaimed advantages, some scholars have voiced concern and issued cautions about extracurricular programming in secondary schools.

As a result, how a principal chooses to organize an extracurricular program in a high school today is a complex process. Three major factors seem to enter into the decision making process. Before a final verdict is reached, the administrator must thoughtfully weigh the benefits to individual students, the effect on the total school culture, and any possible influences resulting from today's changing society.

Extracurricular Participation and Individual Student Benefits

Cockriel (1987, p.3) noted that suddenly during the 1920's, "the educational value of students participating in campus activities was recognized." Since then, there has been more or less continuous support for the position that extracurricular activities contribute positively to the overall school program. Cockriel for example, suggested that during the late 1940's "research and philosophy supported the concept that student participation in an out-of-class organization could meet valuable developmental needs of students" (p. 3).

As early as 1954, Miller, Moyer and Patrick compiled a comprehensive list of the general functions of extra-class activities as "contributions to students." This list included:

1. to provide opportunities for the pursuit of established interests and the development of new interests;
2. to educate for citizenship through experiences and insights that stress leadership, fellowship, cooperation, and independent action;
3. to develop school spirit and morale;
4. to provide opportunities for satisfying the gregarious urge of children and youth;
5. to foster more effective teamwork between students, faculty, and administrative personnel; and
6. to widen student contact outside the school.

In the late 60s, Rizzo, an activities coordinator who shared Miller's beliefs in the positive effects of student participation in extracurricular activities, explained how he and other staff members of Ingomar Middle School were concerned "that only a small percentage of the student body had the opportunity to participate in co-curricular activities." As a result of this concern,

the school devised an extremely successful "activities program." In his article , Rizzo (1969, p. 182) identified two student related factors which fostered the program's engagement of 91.4% of the student population. He posited that two important objectives were met through the operation of a successful activities program. First, extracurricular involvement "helps students develop a knowledge of the responsibilities of living in a democratic society;" and Second, it "assists in meeting the needs and interests of early adolescents." Both of these benefits were also found in the relatively dated list of Miller et al. Rizzo (p. 184) also suggested that if the individual and the program were to experience maximum benefit, it would be "necessary for the students to accept the many responsibilities that are associated with the program [extracurricular]."

Other authors, post 1982, tended to support these early studies as well as contribute further suggestions about the roles of extracurricular programs in secondary schools. Current literature tends to support the social value of extracurricular participation for all facets of the school. Contemporary scholars have generated more evidence that extracurricular activities are beneficial to both the student and the school culture. Astin (1984), a student development theorist whose theory of student involvement is based on the behavioral mechanisms or processes that enhance student development stated, "almost all forms of student involvement enhance student development" (p.301) and that "increasing student development comes about if students are engaged in student-faculty interaction, athletic involvement, and student government" (pp. 303-304). Several common components of student development resulting from extracurricular participation have been recognized through recent research. They include:

1. promotion of student success and recognition beyond academics;
2. fostering of student self-esteem;
3. learning to use leisure time and appreciating out of school activities;
4. promotion of the development of individual interests;
5. encouragement of socialization and friendships; and
6. increasing citizenship in students.

Student Success and Recognition

The Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation researched fourteen secondary schools in attempting to develop a set of criteria for "the good school." In this study, one of the elements identified as contributing to fostering a good school was the offering of extracurricular activities. King and Peart (1990; p. 78) stated:

> Extracurricular activities afford students who do not do well academically the opportunity to be successful in other aspects of school life. Extracurricular programming offers the most natural avenue for broadening the definition of success by providing students with opportunities ... to achieve a sense of school-related self-worth other than academic success.

This study supported the earlier work of Goodlad (1984), who conducted a very comprehensive study of school satisfaction in which parents (6,900), teachers (1,064) and students (13,917) of twenty-four junior and senior high schools were surveyed. The focus of the research was to determine (a) the degree of satisfaction with the school; (b) the correlation between the preferred goal emphasis and the perceived goal emphasis as related to intellectual, personal, social, and vocational; and (c) factors contributing to "a good school" in the eyes of the stakeholders. An interesting trend surfaced in the secondary schools. The teachers, students, and parents all found the perceived goals

substantially lower than the preferred goals in the personal category. Goodlad then expounded that in schools where this was not the case, extracurricular programs were a contributing factor. He further specified that the opportunity for success and recognition was a major factor in student involvement. In addition, he added that extracurricular involvement provided for the fostering of student self-esteem, school spirit, and the encouragement of friendships. These factors will be discussed later in the review of the literature.

In a 1983 presentation on extracurricular activities, the New York State Education Department Student Affairs Task Force described a model which secondary school administrators, teachers, and students could use for a school activities program. The Task Force identified thirteen attributes of a successful program. One of the features was that "extracurricular participation provides students an opportunity to be recognized by parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and peers for efforts in school activities" (p. 6).

Manchey (1986) and Ridgway (1986) described a teacher's involvement in extracurricular activities (one as a debate coach, the other, a drama director) from the perspective of both student and teacher gains which resulted from extra class involvement. Although the articles emphasized teacher job satisfaction, several student profiles were presented. Both authors submitted that extracurricular involvement promotes student success and recognition beyond the academic sphere. Ridgway (p.52) recalled, "I've seen the flush of happiness and pride on Valerie's [a student] face as she takes her bow to a standing ovation."

Griffen (1988, p.88) who also concluded that "student activities provide motivation or recognition for many students," stated that participating in these extra class activities "contributes to the development of self-esteem for students."

Student Self-esteem

Manchey (1986, p. 46), the debate coach, remembered students who made remarkable progress through the experiences of debate. One exceptional story was that of a class valedictorian who said, "When I joined the team, I was a stuttering wimp with no confidence in myself ... Largely, because of forensics, I believe my four years have been a success." Holland and Andre (1987, p. 447) contributed that "participation is positively correlated to improved levels of self-esteem, educational aspirations, and feelings of control over one's life." This was supported by King and Peart (1990, p. 79) who concluded that:

> When students are encouraged to broaden their definition of success in school to include not only academic achievement, but also recognition for achievement in photography, athletics, music, chess and so on, their school-based self-esteem can be raised. If schools promote achievement of students in a broad range of areas, the students can find a definition of themselves that is not only acceptable to them, but is recognized within the school.

Rossow (1990, p. 127), when focusing on the principal's relationship with students, confirmed King and Peart's conclusion: "the wise principal will do well not to take the importance of extracurricular activities too lightly." He presented several general objectives for extracurricular activity programs. One objective clearly states, "to develop a more realistic and positive attitude towards themselves [students]" (p. 129). Other scholars have recently put forth similar arguments about the potential for the development of a positive self concept through extracurricular participation. The list includes Goodlad (1984) and Ridgway (1986). (see appendix A)

Positive self esteem implies a confidence and pride in an individual's accomplishments. Harvancik and Gholsan (1986, p.8) added to the mounting belief during the 1980s that extracurricular involvement contributed to a growth in positive self concept. In a study of first year college students, they showed

"there are significant positive correlations between extracurricular activities (both in and out of school) and all *self-reported* [italics added] high school grades."

The correlation between extracurricular involvement and self concept also arose in a different context. Crain (1985) presented a collection of studies designed to both provide an analysis of and facilitate a critical understanding of public education "in an era of political challenge." One topic discussed was the role of extracurricular activities in relation to desegregation. Crain suggested that through extracurricular participation barriers can be broken and student self-esteem can be built. He also indicated that these encourage more productive use of leisure time.

Use of Leisure Time and Appreciation of Out of School Activities

King and Peart (1990, p. 79) "revealed a positive relationship between participation in school-based activities and involvement in out-of-school activities." They stated that "participating in the life of a school creates a willingness to participate in activities out of school perhaps because those who pursue their interests in school ... learn to enjoy certain games or activities." Manchey (1986, p. 47) posited that debate club members did not have any problems filling in their free time with activities. She stated, "Only a debater would spend the last precious weeks of summer reading about the Environmental Protection Agency."

Crain (1985), Miller (1985), and Rossow (1990) also reported that extracurricular involvement contributed to student appreciation of leisure time and out-of-school activities (see appendix A). Whatever the activity, out-of-school or extracurricular, research has shown that participation encourages socialization and friendships.

Socialization and Friendships

Mendez (1984, p. 60) stated, "American schools have traditionally been called upon to socialize as well as to educate our young people, and extracurricular programs have certainly provided an avenue for this goal to be achieved." Similar comments to his statement that "extracurricular activities undoubtedly allow teachers and students to get to know each other outside the classroom" (p. 3) have been put forward by several other researchers. For example, Ridgway, the drama director, said:

> I have also had the opportunity to work closely with a broad spectrum of students in an environment outside the classroom. We've met on the level of friends, confidantes, and partners working toward a mutually important goal. ... I've seen their unguarded selves as few other teachers have. ... We have often become good friends, coming to the realization that we are not so different after all. (1986, p. 52)

King and Peart (1990, p. 75) found that extracurricular participation not only enhanced student-teacher relationships but fostered friendships between students. They stated, "Extracurricular activities can help students identify with their school, and participation encourages them to socialize and become friends with fellow students." Similarly, Gholsan and Buser (1983) following a national survey of United States schools involving 2,500 randomly selected students, listed in rank order the reasons students presented for their involvement in extra-class activities. Ninety-one % of the respondents stated that their involvement was "to broaden personal and social contacts" (p. 5). The study also revealed that 95% of extracurricular participants are involved "to have an outlet for individual needs and interests" (p. 5).

Individual Interests

The majority of scholars researching extracurricular activities agreed that involvement in these types of activities promotes the development of individual interests. Agreeing with Gholsan and Buser, the Student Affairs Task Force in New York reported (p. 7) that "extracurricular participation addresses the current needs and interests of all facets of the student population whether intellectual, recreational, or social." Mendez (1984, p. 62) concurred that a wide variety of clubs and organizations "have been formed to accommodate a wide variety of individual interests." Boyer (1983, p. 208) also approached this, but from a more concerned and negative viewpoint, when he offered, "too few students participate in school activities, and frequently they join not to serve but to promote their own special interests."

But, even with this warning, Rossow (1990, p. 129) suggested that "principals might consider organizing programs around twelve key operational elements [of activities programs] proposed by Wood and colleagues in The Secondary School Principal, 1979." The first element mentioned was that "student activities should be developed as a result of genuine interest by students." Another element mentioned by Rossow was that "student activities should have educational values that students can draw upon throughout their lives." The related concept of increasing citizenship in students has been addressed by several other scholars.

Citizenship in Students

Rizzo (1969, p. 182) stated that the primary objective of his activities program was "to help students develop a knowledge of the responsibilities of living in a democratic society." Gholsan and Buser (1983, p. 6) expanded on Rizzo's objective:

> Cooperation and understanding among social, racial, and ethnic groups in the student body as well as in out-of-school life is another worthwhile characteristic of the extra-class activity program. ... The development of democratic and cooperative values is a primary principal of the extra-class program.

However, Boyer (1983, p. 209) continued to raise cautions about current extracurricular programs by stating that although the intent to develop citizenship through participation in school sponsored activities is worthy, it may not be happening. He suggested that, "As for acting as small-scale democracies, student clubs and organizations seem more marked by exclusivity and class distinctions than by democratic spirit."

Summary

The potential benefits of extracurricular involvement identified above are those most frequently mentioned in the literature. There are, however, several other factors that are mentioned less often: (a) affording opportunities to travel (Mendez and Manchey); (b) developing leadership qualities (Gholsan & Buser); (c) satisfying gregarious urges of students (Miller et al.); and (d) keeping students in school (King & Peart).

Although the majority of the above evidence suggests that extracurricular involvement results in individual student benefit, one should be cautious in postulating cause-effect relationships. Holland and Andre (1987, p. 447) noted that "although such correlations have been shown to exist, the available research does not demonstrate convincingly that participation causes desirable outcomes" and that "preexisting personality and social differences between participants and nonparticipants may account for the observed correlations." However, which ever way one perceives the development (that is, which came first, the chicken or the egg?), what has been demonstrated with surprising consistency is that not only does participation in extracurricular

activities co-relate with student characteristics, it has been shown to affect school culture. Support for this position can be found in Goodlad (1984, pp. 258-264) when he compared "most" and "least" satisfying schools. In the study outlined previously, he judged Mayberry Senior High School to be in the most satisfying school category. He tied this satisfaction to a high degree of extracurricular participation (p. 261). He pointed out that "almost every student at Mayberry participated in extracurricular activities." He also stated:

> It is the extracurriculum of team sports and student government and so on, not the regular academic program, that provides opportunity for working toward shared goals, contributing to group solutions, achieving through a division of labor, and experiencing success as a member of a group. (p. 266)

Holland and Andre (1987, p. 24) concurred. They wrote, "One of the most important differences found between successful and unsuccessful schools was that effective schools had higher levels of student participation in extracurricular activities." How does extracurricular participation contribute to school culture?

Extracurricular Participation and School Culture

The atmosphere of a school is, according to King and Peart (1990, p. 6), "associated with students' and teachers' satisfaction, positive relationships in the school and a sense of belonging." This atmosphere is consistent with a school's culture (behavioral norms, assumptions, philosophies and beliefs). Because of unique cultures, each individual school has its own identity. Reputations and traditions are inevitable with secondary schools. Schools have long been labelled with tags such as academic, athletic, fine arts, etc. They have also been deemed exciting, boring, good or bad. Educators have been searching for the qualities which make a school "a good school." King

and Peart (1990, p.6) recognized that "in the past dozen years a concerted effort has been made in the United Kingdom and the United States to identify the characteristics of effective schools."

Scholars, including King and Peart (1990), Rutter (1979), and Goodlad (1984) have examined high schools with the intent of identifying the intrinsic properties of acclaimed "good schools." A number of researchers, including these three, use "school atmosphere" as their criterion of goodness. Several elements contributing to school atmosphere have been isolated through their studies. What was common in their work was the assumption that students and other stakeholders were satisfied with "good schools." In addition, schools were considered "good schools" if the students liked being there. Each of these research teams identified that having extracurricular programs and substantial student participation was an important component of "the good school."

An obvious gap in this data base was noted in the research of Lightfoot (1983) where, in her analysis of "the good high school," a lack of information on the role of extracurricular activities existed. Although she did introduce the extent of extracurricular programs in each of the six high schools studied, no conclusions were drawn about their impact on school culture. She did address extracurricular activities via descriptions of student involvement, and as a result, some inferences that extracurricular activities play a role in establishing a school's culture could be made. For example, in her discussions with a specific principal she started her questioning with "Because of it's [the school's] strong reputation as an avid sports school..."

Assuming that if students are satisfied with their school, the school is a good school with an established culture acceptable to the student body, what role do extracurricular activities play in establishing this culture? Several

scholars including Rossow (1990) and Goodlad (1984) suggested that extracurricular participation promotes student satisfaction with their school by promoting "school spirit" (see appendix A). Second, other authors like Glanfield (1989) said students appreciated the atmosphere (which King and Peart define as "a sense of belonging" and "a pride in school") which develops from an increased teacher-student rapport resulting from extracurricular programs.

Extracurricular Activities and School Spirit

In her study of high school students' satisfaction with high school experiences, Glanfield (1989, p. 85) found that extracurricular participation was both a satisfier and a dissatisfier for different high school students. She reported that "a grade 11 male, indicated that sports was not only one of the most satisfying things in his school life, but also provided him with a 'great deal of pride representing my school'." Other students expressed dissatisfaction with school spirit including "low school spirit, negative school climate, and lack of trust." She reported one grade 11 student as saying, "people don't care about this school at all. No school spirit and pride!" She concluded that students think extracurricular participation is important in establishing a sense of pride in the school.

The similar, but more in depth, study of 14 Ontario high schools by King and Peart (1990) found that extracurricular activities were important in establishing a school's culture. They concurred with Glanfield that "extracurricular participation, although important to school atmosphere, is one of many elements which establish the overall climate of a school." They elaborated by suggesting that:

> The emphasis placed on school atmosphere does not compromise expectations of student achievement. The school in which a majority of students have a sense of belonging and are proud to attend cannot be considered totally effective if most of the students are not accumulating the required number of credits to graduate in a reasonable time, if some are leaving school before they graduate, or if most students do not see how their courses are preparing them for the future. (p. 8)

Do extracurricular programs play a role in meeting these requirements? King and Peart (1990), suggest that one of the key factors required to encourage student learning and therefore lower this possibility of drop-outs or failures is student-teacher rapport. Gholsan and Buser (1983, p. 5) reported that 80% of the 2,500 students they surveyed who participated in extracurricular activities said, "they were involved in extra-class activities to improve relations with teachers."

Student-Teacher Rapport

Ridgway (1986) and the New York State Education Department Student Affairs Task Force (1983) are among those who have proposed that individual satisfaction is gained by students and teachers involved in extracurricular activities through the opportunity to enhance student-teacher relationships (see appendix A). Even Mendez (1984), who throughout his article questioned the degree of extracurricular activity in today's schools posited, "Extracurricular activities undoubtedly allow teachers and students to get to know each other outside the classroom, and that is a great benefit" (p. 63). King and Peart (1990, p.77) concurred:

> Teacher involvement in the extracurricular program generates dividends for both students and teachers. Most teachers see their involvement with students in school activities out of the classroom as one of the most satisfying aspects of their job. We obtained a significant positive correlation (.28) between students' participation in extracurricular programs and their responses on questions concerning their relationship

> with teachers. The rapport between students and teachers is enhanced through their mutual interest and interaction in extracurricular activities. Students and teachers who get to know each other outside the classroom learn to relate in informal and relaxed ways. Knowing more about their students' interests enables teachers to treat students as individuals more readily; seeing more a personal side of their teachers allows students to feel less distant from them. Students sense that the extra time and energy some teachers devote to extracurricular activities reflects an attitude of caring and special interest in them.

King and Peart (1990, pp.38-39) focussed on the importance of student-teacher rapport and school spirit in creating an atmosphere conducive to learning as they discussed one of the schools in their study. Students of Alta View Secondary School rated their school highest as "the school is a nice place to be" and "student-teacher relationships are very strong." They also ranked first in student involvement in extracurricular activities (78%). How much can we value the inference that extracurricular activities are responsible for creating the strong student-teacher relationships that are in turn responsible for making the school a nice place to be?

With the limited amount of research on extracurricular activities and their role in creating a school's culture, it is understandable that many questions lie still unanswered. There is some evidence that extracurricular activities do play a role in creating a specific culture for a school. To what extent and in what manner is still not clearly fathomed. However, as previously stated, current research has suggested a strong relationship between extracurricular involvement and individual student benefit. Gaining an understanding of the exact roles of extracurricular activities in secondary schools is a difficult task. Today's society is changing; consequently, the needs, goals and interests of individual students and individual schools are in flux. These changes are already altering the roles of extracurricular activities for high school students.

Other Factors Influencing the Role of Extracurricular Activities

Both schools and individual students are being confronted with increasing financial pressures. Mendez (1984) uses the high cost of maintaining athletic programs as a reason to ask the question, "Have we -- in our quest to provide more and more experiences for students -- lost sight of the true purpose of our schools?" (p.60). He presented a rationale for extracurricular activity, but ultimately questioned whether we have "gone overboard" in attempting to provide these opportunities to students.

Gholsan and Buser (1983, p. 10) reported that 89% of nonparticipants cited having jobs outside of school as the primary reason for not taking part in activity programs. This reason, although not as dramatic (38.1%) was also forwarded by Vornberg (as cited in Rossow, 1990, p.132). 7.2% of the respondents in Vornberg's study said the reasons they were not involved was because extracurricular activities took up time from school work. With today's academic and financial pressures, are these factors even more prevalent today?

This review of the literature focussed on extracurricular activities and their role in college and high school programming. Several scholars such as King and Peart (1990) presented information about the amount of student participation in these activities. Rizzo (1969) and Rossow (1990), along with many other scholars (see appendix A), demonstrated the impact of extracurricular participation on students (academically, socially and developmentally). Lightfoot (1983) and Goodlad (1984) were two of several authors to raise a question about what role student participation in extracurricular activities plays in contributing to a school's culture. A final point is that financial and academic matters appear to be becoming more important

factors in students' decisions as to whether they will participate in extracurricular activities.

Even though the literature is limited in quantity, most of what is available suggests that extracurricular activities play a positive role in good high schools. But there are unanswered questions. Does participation in extracurricular activities contribute to students being successful, or do successful students choose to be involved? Are schools with strong extracurricular programs making the best use of their resources? Is there some level of goal displacement in such schools?

The answers to these and related questions are important to school administrators. They are currently faced with difficult economic times, often requiring that they "cut back" programming in their schools. In doing so they must weigh the positives and negatives of all "optional" programming, including extracurricular activities. That they must make such decisions highlights the importance of their having an accurate understanding of the significance of extracurricular activities to their students' schooling.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of information available to administrators faced with such difficult decisions through the examination of the attitudes that students within a specific area of Alberta possess about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling.

Chapter III

Research Design and Methodology

The discussion of research design and methodology presented in this chapter is divided into four sub-topics: nature of the study, research methodology, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Nature of the Study

The study was designed to be both exploratory and descriptive. To use Bogdan and Biklen's explanation (1982, p. 29), the study was exploratory in the sense that the researcher is "interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives. In other words, the researcher is concerned with *"participant perspectives."* The opportunity for students to discuss their feelings about what extracurricular activities meant to them and their school was the vehicle which provided the development of a rich data base of meaningful high school student perspectives. Bogdan and Biklen (p. 32) stated that "reality comes to be understood to human beings only in the form in which it is perceived." Thus, the opportunity to discuss students' attitudes about extracurricular participation allowed me to gain an understanding of the meaning of this involvement to these high school students in these particular situations.

The study was descriptive in the sense that the data, as Bogdan and Biklen (p. 28) wrote, "was collected in the form of words ... rather than numbers." It described the attitudes of the students through "quotations from the data which illustrated and substantiated the data analysis" (p. 28).

The Participants

The study involved grade 10 and grade 12 students registered in two 700 to 800 student central Alberta comprehensive high schools. Each school offers academic, vocational, business, and fine arts courses. School One is located in a city of 10,000 people. It is a composite school accommodating public, separate, and county students. Ten percent of the school population is Aboriginal. School Two is located in a town of 5,000 people. It is a composite school with no significant Aboriginal population but approximately the same mix of 50 percent bussed, county students and 50 percent resident town students.

The two components of the study used different sampling procedures. The initial "degree of involvement" questionnaire survey (see appendix B) was issued to the entire grade 10 and grade 12 populations of both schools. Of the 940 surveys distributed, a total of 719 responses were received. The school administration requested that individual teachers administer the questionnaire during a short segment of their class time. The size of the potential group of participants was reduced by two factors: (a) individual classes or individual students who did not respond; and (b) students absent during data collection.

Initially, 36 volunteers were selected through purposive sampling to be interviewed. They were to include 18 students from each school (nine from grade 10 and nine from grade 12). The grade groupings were to include (a) three nonparticipants, (b) three participants -- involved in one or two activities, and (c) three "super" participants -- involved in three or more activities. The individual students were to be chosen on the recommendation of the school principal and guidance counsellor who were asked to try as best as possible to consider the student's ability and willingness to communicate.

As the interviews proceeded, a commonality between the students was recognized. A general sense of maturity and responsibility was noticed.

Having worked with high school students for 15 years, I began to question the expected diversity of the sample. As a result of my curiosity, I asked each principal to review their student selection process with me. Both principals said that after explaining the study to the students of the school, they asked for volunteers . I then asked myself, "Was this the purposive sample I had intended?"

After discussing my concern with each of the school principals, I requested permission to interview one additional grade 12 nonparticipant who would not, in their estimation, "volunteer to participate in this or any other school related activity." Because of my previous work at one of the schools, I selected an individual who I believed was representative of this faction of the student population. The principal of the other school was able to identify a second student who met this newly established criterion. This meant that a total of 38 interviews were conducted.

Methodology

The research, which was conducted over several months, involved a questionnaire survey and student interviews. This section, which will initially present how the data were collected and analyzed, will be concluded with a presentation of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Data Collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the study. A questionnaire survey was distributed to the grade 10 and grade 12 students in both schools. In addition to the brief questionnaire, 38 interviews were conducted with grade 10 and grade 12 students of the two schools. These interviews constituted the major emphasis of the data collection.

Questionnaire data. Before identifying and gaining consent from the participants, the short class questionnaire survey was randomly administered in each school in order to ascertain the extent of student involvement in extracurricular activities. Each student was asked the number of extra class activities that they were involved in throughout the current year. Prior to administering the survey, the teachers were asked to clarify the meaning of "extracurricular activities" by reading the statement found at the top of the survey. The students then recorded their answers confidentially.

Interview data. Participating students from one of the schools were contacted by telephone and given an explanation of the study. Upon agreement to participate in an interview, arrangements were made for the parental consent to participate forms to be picked up at the school's general office the following day. An interview time was also made during that contact. Each student was assured that any further questions would be answered at that time. Prior to the interview, each student, upon handing in the consent form if required (under 18 years of age), was given a brief review of the project as well as the option to withdraw at any time if they so chose.

Because of the distance from the other school, the students were not contacted individually for an introduction to the study. The principal coordinated a common meeting time for me to meet all of the students who volunteered to participate in the study. Over a noon hour, I met the potential interviewees in the large conference room of the school. After an explanation of the study, those students who were still interested in volunteering to be interviewed were given the parental consent form, if necessary. An interview schedule was immediately set up.

At both schools, interviews were conducted in the conference rooms. After meeting the students, collecting their signed consent forms, outlining the nature and purpose of the study, restating the promise of confidentiality and anonymity, and reminding them of their option to withdraw at any time, permission to tape the interview was requested. After the "house keeping" chores were completed, I started the formal interview. Transcripts of the interviews made up the bulk of the data for analysis. In addition, fieldnotes and log entries were made the evening of the interviews.

The first few questions of the interview were very structured and demographic in nature. This strategy was used for two purposes. First, it facilitated gaining the important information about the interviewee. I was able to confirm the grade and the amount and kind of extracurricular involvement. This gave me a chance to crudely analyze the data as they were presented. It also afforded the students some "quick and easy" questions which helped the student "get into the swing of things" before more philosophical questions regarding attitudes and feelings were introduced. Reflections were not requested until well into the interview when a train of thought was established. This strategy facilitated establishing a rapport between myself and the student before some of the more personal responses were requested. The majority of the interview was open-ended. An exploratory question about "what the student feels the role of extracurricular activities is for them" initiated a free-flowing discussion. The emphasis of the interview facilitated students relating experiences with or sharing their attitudes about extracurricular activities.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were analyzed to establish the proportion of students from each school who were involved in specific categories of extracurricular

involvement. Frequency counts were used to get a sense of whether differences existed between the involvement levels in the two schools. The results of this analysis also helped focus the analysis of interview data. For instance, analysis of the questionnaire data led me to examine carefully the interview data for explanations of why grade 12 students tended to be more active than grade 10 students. The findings of the analysis of the questionnaire data are presented at the beginning of chapter IV.

Each of the interviews was taped and all but two transcribed. During the process, a preliminary analysis was undertaken. Bogdan and Biklen are among those who support such an approach to analysis. They proposed that "data analysis is an ongoing part of the research" (1982, p. 56). Having transcribed and done preliminary analysis of twenty interviews, I was not finding any new data. This initial analysis involved developing a "rough categorization" of the data. I continued to transcribe four more interviews. When no new data surfaced, I decided that data saturation, "the point of data collection where the information you get becomes redundant" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 64), had been achieved and that further transcribing would not enrich the data. Transcripts were then read several times and the tapes were listened to on several occasions. Notes of important and relevant comments were made while listening to the interviews that were not transcribed. Voice inflections and pauses supplied further valuable insight onto the data. For example, when I report in Chapter IV that a senior student spoke very emotionally about the upcoming prom dance, that reflects my observation that her voice inflections conveyed a strong sense of personal gratification with her involvement.

Patterns of thought surfaced while I read the transcriptions and listened to the tapes. As Bogdan and Biklen (p. 156) stated:

> As you read through your data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out. ... You search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics your data cover, and then you write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns.

General patterns such as (a) personal satisfaction gained through participation, (b) an exciting school atmosphere, (c) difficult decisions about participation, and (d) attitudes about participation changing through a student's tenure at the school were defined as potential themes. More specific ideas were identified and grouped as categories of data. These included concepts like (a) exploring personal interests, (b) developing new relationships, (c) feeling good about themselves, (d) school spirit, (e) part-time employment, and (f) academic pressures.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 300) have proposed four means to "operationalize trustworthiness in naturalistic research." These include "credibility," "transferability," "dependability," and "confirmability."

Before any analysis was attempted, the participants were given copies of their transcription to read. Credibility was enhanced by asking the students to add to, delete from, expound upon, or modify any segment of the transcript that they felt required amendment. Once these member checks were complete and agreement about the accuracy of the transcript had been made, an initial data analysis was completed. A second strategy of "triangulation" was used to improve credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 305) suggested that one mode of triangulation is "the use of multiple and different sources." By using both interview and questionnaire data along with including grade 10 and grade 12 students from different schools, a more "credible" data base was established.

Finally, two colleagues reviewed the themes that I had identified from the transcripts. These reviews and the subsequent peer debriefings confirmed my analysis.

Transferability, and thus applicability of the results of this study to other specific settings, was addressed through the description of the schools and student participants presented earlier in this chapter. These descriptions depict the context in which the study was conducted.

As mentioned earlier, fieldnotes were made immediately after the interviews. This facilitated easy substantiation of my data. It also allowed me to draw inferences about the quality of my data. Through repeated analysis of the fieldnotes, interview tapes and transcripts, personal bias in the analysis was avoided as much as possible. A personal log, member checks, peer debriefing and the reflexivity just discussed were used to increase dependability and confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the data collection, permission to conduct the research was obtained from:

1. The Department of Educational Administration Research Ethics Review Committee, the University of Alberta.
2. The two superintendents of the two school districts.
3. The principals of the two schools (see appendix C).
4. The participants.
5. The parents of the volunteering students (see appendix D).

After receiving permission from the Ethics Review Committee to conduct my research, several steps were undertaken to ensure appropriate ethics were followed throughout the study. Several of the students involved in the

interviews were under 18 years of age. They were informed of their opportunity to withdraw from the interview at any time. Parental or guardian permission was also acquired. The consent letter outlined the study for the parents. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the Superintendent, the principal and the individual students. Complete confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed to the school and the individual participants.

Just prior to data collection, the participants were asked permission to tape record the interviews. It was explained that transcripts of the interviews would be made available to each participant to verify, add to, delete from, or expound upon before finalizing the data. Complete confidentiality and anonymity was ensured for all participants of the study.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis and Description

> It is better to be involved in extracurricular activities than not to be involved. It's better totally as a person; mentally,socially, spiritually, everything. The four aspects of life. Physically you're totally a better person. I'm not saying that people without extracurricular activities aren't good but I think as a person you are all around better. You have a better outlook on life. You look forward to going to school. You look forward to graduating. You want to graduate and go on ahead with life.

This quote from a grade 10 student serves as a testimonial to the value of extracurricular activities to high school students. Is this a common thought or does this student's impression of the value of high school extracurricular activities inflate their significance to his schooling? An examination of the degree of student involvement in extracurricular activities as well as their attitudes and ideas about the significance of extracurricular participation was undertaken in order to gain a better understanding of this issue.

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of my research. First, I present three interesting trends which emerged from the results of the questionnaire administered to help determine the degree of high school student involvement in extracurricular activities. Second, I discuss four very broad themes identified through the analysis of individual student interview transcriptions. The four themes include: (a) factors contributing to student involvement; (b) factors contributing to non-involvement; (c) school culture; and (d) student attitude changes.

Degree of involvement

In the selected high schools, three interesting trends emerged from the initial "degree of involvement" survey. Of primary significance was the fact that more than 58% of the students in each school were involved in some form of extracurricular activity during the school year. The analysis of the data is displayed in table 4.1. One school had 68.44% of the 301 students surveyed involved in at least one activity while the other school had 58.61% of the 418 student responses indicating involvement in a minimum of one extracurricular activity. 62.73% of the total sample were involved in some form of extracurricular activity.

Table 4.1
Frequency and Percentage Frequency Distribution of Respondents Classified by Involvement
(N = 719)

Venue	Involvement *f*	%
School 1 (N = 418)	245	58.61
School 2 (N = 301)	206	68.44
Overall (N = 719)	451	62.73

Further analysis showed that the percentage of grade 10 and grade 12 students involved in extracurricular activities decreased as the number of activities increased (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2
Percentage Frequency Distribution of Respondents Classified By Number of Activities and Grade Level (N = 719)

Response Category	Grade 10 %	Grade 12 %
No activities	41.31	32.30
One activity	27.96	27.95
Two activities	18.39	21.12
Three or more activities	12.34	18.63
Total	100.0	100.0

The data displayed in table 4.2 also indicated that a higher percentage of grade 12 students were involved in extracurricular activities than their grade 10 counterparts. Although an equal percentage of grade 10 and grade 12 students participated in one extracurricular activity, only 18.39% of the grade 10 students were involved in two activities while 21.12% of the grade 12 students were involved in two activities. Among very involved students (i.e. involved in three or more activities) there was even a greater discrepancy between the grade 10 and 12 groups. 18.63% of the grade 12 students were very involved as compared to only 12.34% of the grade 10 students.

Not only were a substantial number of high school students involved in extracurricular activities, but grade 12 students tended to be more active than grade 10 students in these school sponsored activities.

Student Attitudes

What factors contributed to the (a) relatively high interest shown toward participation in extracurricular activities, and (b) higher percentage of extracurricular participation by grade 12 students?

Four themes developed from the interview data seem to address these questions. First, participating students felt personal satisfaction (ensued from several different factors) contributed to their involvement.

Second, students faced several dilemmas (resulting from factors contributing to non-involvement) regarding their participation in these activities. These dilemmas, and more significantly their decisions, influenced the students' degree of participation. Analysis of these quandaries helped clarify why some students chose either to limit their involvement or not to become involved at all. It also showed why grade 12 students were generally more involved in extracurricular activities than were their grade 10 counterparts.

Third, a positive school culture was derived through opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities in both high schools. This, and the personal satisfaction experienced through participation contributed to the high proportion of student involvement in high school extracurricular activities.

Finally, several students experienced a change in attitude toward extracurricular activities as they spent more time at their high school. Noting this attitude change also helped gain an understanding of why freshmen students were less active than their senior counterparts.

Factors Contributing to Involvement

A central theme related to the extent to which students strongly believed that the personal satisfaction one felt from being involved in an extracurricular

activity supplied them with the motivation to participate. Exploring their personal interests, enhancing learning experiences, enjoying the activities, developing new relationships, receiving personal gains, feeling good about themselves, and creating memories were important factors which contributed to students' involvement in extracurricular school activities.

Exploring personal interests. Extracurricular involvement afforded students the chance to further investigate their own interests. Having an interest in a specific activity prior to coming to the high school seemed to be a very important factor in determining whether or not a student chose to become involved in a specific extracurricular activity provided by the school. Most students that were involved had interests in specific areas previous to coming to high school and were waiting to get to the school in order to further pursue those interests. When asked why he got involved, one student simply stated, "It's just basically your own interests. By then [high school] you know what you like." A grade 10 female student concurred: "I love track and field so I always go in that."

I found it interesting that one female student, who had always been interested in playing football and was captain or her junior high school intramural football team, decided that she didn't really want to play football when she came to high school. But, she still wanted to be involved in the game in some capacity. When asked why see chose to manage the football team she replied, "I'm really interested in football and since I really couldn't play, I thought 'why not manage?' I thought it would be kind of neat to be a manager and see what goes on behind the scenes."

Conversely, several students who were not involved in any extracurricular activities stated that they were just not interested in anything

that was offered at the school. A grade 10 student frankly stated that "there is nothing here that interests me." He noted that his main spare time activity was shooting pool, and hypothesized that "if the school had pool tables and there was a 'pool club', I would join that in a minute."

For others, the fact that an activity that they were interested in was not offered was a driving force behind the formation of a new extracurricular activity in the school. A grade 12 student, who was "really interested in increasing social awareness in people and in what's going on" reflected back to grade 10 and said:

> In grade 10 there were about four of us who tried to start a group called 'Students With a Purpose' which was strictly touching on more social awareness and things like that. I think people need to be aware of what is happening around them.

Not all the students used extracurricular activities to "promote a cause." To many, the involvement was more personal. A grade 12 band student referred to his involvement as a "hobby." He mentioned that "it gives him a chance to go into different areas he wants to" and emphasized "he wouldn't be in them [extracurricular activities] if he wasn't interested in them."

Throughout the interviews, specific interests in travel, writing, the environment, sports, acting, and simply wanting to learn were identified as personally satisfying endeavors. This personal interest and consequent involvement led directly to new and exciting learning experiences.

Enhancing learning experiences. Most frequently, testimonials to learning through extracurricular involvement were given by grade 12 students. These students professed that extracurricular activities helped them to learn to more effectively communicate, make decisions, manage time, and honor commitment. These important life skills were deemed valuable lessons.

Some students made reference to the personal growth which resulted from learning to communicate and interact with others. A grade 12 participant, who acknowledged at the beginning of the interview that she was "quite shy" and "never really liked talking", stated, "it [involvement in students' council] has taught me to speak out in front of people, it has helped me to communicate with people." As she said this she had a look of accomplishment about her which seemed to emphasize her sense of personal satisfaction with that particular ability. Another student (grade 10) suggested that "it [involvement] has helped me communicate with more students and teachers. It's a great way to develop how you express yourself."

In addition to the interpersonal skill of communication, extracurricular participation brought personal gratification by helping develop the critical skills of decision making and time management. With respect to time management, a grade 12 student involved in four extracurricular activities including the presidency of the students' council said, "You [the student] always seem to be busy." But, she then went on to add that as a result of this busyness, "It [involvement] has taught me how to organize things." Being able to organize, prioritize and then make decisions are critical components of effective time management. A grade 10 honors student involved in several extracurricular activities as well as being the secretary and youth group president in the church, discussed prioritizing and decision making when she stated:

> I've done as much as I could. I tried to get into all these things but they come the same night and you just can't do them all but you get involved in as much as you can. You have to choose between them. You can't do everything. That's what I've done and I'm happy with it.

Decision making will be discussed again later in the chapter with respect to dilemmas which students face regarding extracurricular involvement.

A bi-product of learning these skills seemed to be the development of leadership abilities. When referring to what was learned from extracurricular participation, the captain of the volleyball team stated, "Leadership skills - things that will help me in the future." This concept of extracurricular involvement being beneficial for the future was raised over and over again, especially by grade 12 students.

Honoring commitment was another life skill which students reported they developed through extracurricular involvement. If you were to become a participant in extracurricular activities and if they were to be meaningful, you must commit yourself to the activity. When discussing her thoughts about the last track and field practice, a grade 10 student expressed:

> You have to give of yourself more. You have to keep in good shape and just the mental--you have to tell yourself to keep going, keep going. That builds up your mind. It makes you do it. You want to finish. You want to make yourself do it. You've got to do it.

With this type of commitment to an activity, in addition to developing life skills, the opportunity to accrue or improve specific skills such as music or athletic techniques, writing skills, or research strategies was also afforded. Through practice, whether it be volleyball, singing or editing, a person became more proficient at the unique skills they were using in a specific activity . A grade 12 student, who confessed that he wanted to play on the school volleyball team but didn't think that he was good enough told, with some envy in his voice, the story of a classmate who "had more guts than me." He said:

> I know one individual who didn't make the basketball team in grade 10. In grade 11 he made the team but didn't get to play much. He went to every practice and spent every free minute shooting hoops in the playground. In grade 12 he was the captain of the team. He was the best player on the team.

The person in the story obviously developed his basketball skills as he continued with the activity. Another student concurred: "When you work with the newspaper, you are going to research and write and naturally develop those talents and skills." The emphatic tone of voice in both of the previous participants indicated that a sense of satisfaction accompanied those developments.

One student simply said that they were involved in extracurricular activities because "I like to learn things." Enjoying the activity seemed very important motivation for the participants.

Enjoying the activities. Students commented on the enjoyment they experienced through participation in extracurricular activities. These comments illustrate the level of student enjoyment: (a) "it [involvement] makes school fun--**it's fun**", (b) "it's enjoyable", (c) "we were all really excited because we had put out our first edition [school newspaper] and that was really fun", and (d) "it [aerobic display] was a blast." When talking about his intramural involvement, a grade 12 student said, "You can go out and beat it [a badminton shuttlecock] around and goof around and have fun and laugh and joke."

Even those students who were not involved in any extracurricular activities hypothesized that enjoyment was a major reason that students became involved in these extra activities. When asked how they would feel if all the extracurricular activities in the school were to be cancelled, a nonparticipant said:

> I would be upset. Not really for me but for the people that are so involved. The people that are involved obviously like it. They want to get out and do things. Intramurals and stuff--that's the time when you can have fun and play games and everything. That way they can go out and have a good time and then go back to work.

For some, extracurricular activities seemed to supply an added dimension that alleviated the routines of high school academic work. When asked why some people don't get involved, an extracurricular participant speculated, "It depends what they want out of school. If you are here to get grades and that's it or if you are here to have fun." These feelings of enjoying the activities and enjoying school surface again under the topic of school climate.

Participation in extracurricular activities created a paradox. To some, the challenge of competition was exciting; to others, stressful. Extracurricular activities associated with sport generally conjured up the image of competition. One grade 12 participant who has competed in track and field from grade 10 through to grade 12 stated, "It was more fun then [grade 10] and now it's more to win. You are competing for the school. I like that." Even a nonparticipant recognized this:

> A lot of people in the school like sports and they like the competition. If they didn't have that competition, I don't think they would like it very much. It's kind of a battle. Like we are better than everybody else.

When discussing a theoretically non-competitive intramural program, one extracurricular participant said, "I guess you could join that but I think it is still fairly competitive because you still have your jocks going in and that's what the competition will turn into." I found it interesting that this person said that they really liked basketball but didn't think that they would fit in with the players on the team. She admitted that she preferred to play for fun and that she thought that most of the team players were there only to win. Other students noted that the competitive nature of some extracurricular activities was not enjoyable. This was evident from statements like: (a) "I enjoy playing my sax as long as it doesn't get too intense. He [the supervisor] likes to get too serious sometimes"; and (b) "I wanted to be involved [in sports] but I didn't know if I

could handle the kind of stress of being highly competitive." The first comment was made by a grade 12 student who at one time quit the extracurricular band because of the pressure put on by the instructor. The second was made by the grade 12 student who felt that even intramural sports were too competitive.

The effect of competing varied from individual to individual but seemed to be a definite factor in determining whether individuals chose to be involved in extracurricular activities. Consequently, those individuals who enjoy the thrill of competition got involved in competitive extracurricular activities while those that do not, either chose to do non-competitive activities or to not be involved at all.

In addition to the personal satisfaction of enjoying extracurricular activities, students found that establishing new relationships was also very gratifying. One student said,"I enjoy the friendships that you can get out of the activity and the people you meet. You know more people and have more acquaintances."

Developing new relationships. The students involved in extracurricular activities strongly agreed that meeting new people and establishing more friendships results from extracurricular involvement. Making friends and meeting people was mentioned by over two-thirds of the students. One student simply stated, "You meet different people and you get way more friends." Even nonparticipants felt that the major reason others became involved in extracurricular activities was to develop and maintain friendships. When asked what they might say to incoming grade 10 students, one grade 12 nonparticipant said, "Get involved. It's good to get to know people (especially in your grade 10 year). You get introduced to people that are in higher grades but maybe in the same club as you."

Once students were involved in these activities, new student-student and student-teacher relationships evolved. There were increased opportunities to "interact." A grade 10 participant who when asked why they had chosen to become involved in extracurricular activities commented, "To meet people. Mostly to meet people and get involved with other people in the school." It appeared that these friendships could become very strong. One student referred to the people involved in specific extracurricular activities as "sort of brotherhoods." This closeness of a group was also recognized but in some cases viewed differently by some nonparticipants who referred to the members of extracurricular activities as "cliques."

Teachers were viewed as holding a place in these extracurricular groups and students were very aware of teacher involvement in extracurricular activities. In general, students involved in extracurricular activities believed that teachers who supervised or participated in these activities related better to students. One grade 10 student suggested that:

> Teachers [involved in extracurricular activities] have to be really sincere and take the time to talk to each person as an individual and know their names and speak to them face to face and know them. ... If they teach you in a class you know them as a teacher but outside of class, in an extracurricular activity, they may be totally different and you may respect them for different reasons in each place. You may feel different about them. You can talk to them easier.

A grade 12 student, when discussing student-teacher interactions noted:

> You learned more from him [participating teacher]. You could actually be a friend to him. With the activities, you can be more of a friend to a teacher than the regular student-teacher relationship in the classroom. ... With the ones [teachers] that don't participate in any programs, it's really hard to know them.

Generally, students seemed to hold participating teachers in high esteem.

In addition to the above comments, students described teachers that were involved in extracurricular activities with positive statements such as: (a) "They get to know you more personally"; (b) "They are more fun"; and (c) "They make you feel more human." These illustrate the respect students feel toward teachers that are involved in school activities. One student summed it up nicely:

> You just have more respect for them because they are taking the time out for us. **They care**.

As the interviews progressed, it was evident that most students were pleased and satisfied with the positive relationships that were developed between themselves and teachers who were involved in extracurricular activities. However, this was not true for all students. In reference to being taught by his extracurricular supervisor, one participant shared:

> That's one big downfall ... he [the instructor] says "It really doesn't matter. Extracurricular band has nothing to do with your actual classroom." In my opinion that is definitely wrong. I can't go to Nationals and when I tell him, I figure my mark will go down 10%. ... In that way it is really unfair.

Even though it may have seemed unfair to this student, the prospect of personal gain (or, in the case of this student, personal loss) was one of the factors that motivated student involvement in extracurricular activities.

Receiving personal gain. This same student reflected back to his grade 10 year when he quit the extracurricular jazz band program. At that time he felt that his classroom mark was intentionally lowered because he quit. However, when asked why he rejoined the band and continued to be involved, he said:

> It gives me a chance to relax and release tension and stress, be with my friends, and travel to other schools and cities. Besides, it gives me something to do and keeps me out of trouble.

These benefits, along with others, were often mentioned by the students. A grade 10 football player felt that "if I was able to play well enough, I possibly might be able to get a scholarship for university which would help with the cost in the future." A grade 12 student commented, "Now that I know some of the scholarships and what they want [what the requirements are], I'd probably get more involved." One student even suggested that being involved in extracurricular activities will help you in finding a job. She said, "By being involved and putting it [your involvement] on your resume, it makes them [employers] know that you are committed and that you'll get down to work." These students were aware and in most cases satisfied in the knowledge that involvement in extracurricular activities would result in a benefit for the future. One student confidently stated," It [involvement] gets me ready for the future." Besides helping participants for the future, immediate personal gains were experienced through extracurricular involvement

The opportunity to travel, the improving of specific skills (e.g. playing the saxophone), recognition as being part of a winner, and getting into shape were the most commonly mentioned personal gains. A grade 12 "super jock," involved in several competitive sport teams felt that there were numerous gains from extracurricular involvement. When asked why he was involved in extracurricular activities, he sat back in his chair and confidently stated:

> Extracurricular activities are something to keep me in shape. Something to be recognized like people know who you are and that you play on a sports team. It gives you some recognition. ... I like it when I'm out on the floor and people cheer for me. I like that. ... I like going on trips. I've been to Saskatchewan, all over Alberta, and to Oregon with school activities.

A second participant reminisced about her grade 10 year: "The year before [she was in grade 9], the cheer leading squad had gone to Chicago for the

world championships and they came in third. I wanted badly to be a part of that." This, and many similar statements, illustrate that students felt recognition and with that, the development of a positive self-concept was one of the most satisfying of the potential personal gains. This theme also appears in the literature. Griffen (1988, p. 88), for example, wrote "student activities contribute to the development of self-esteem and leadership, and provide motivation or recognition for many students." A grade 10 student said it this way: "You gain confidence in yourself to go out and do things. Yeah, confidence and pride if you do well."

As students developed more and more skill, knowledge, and confidence and began to experience success, a general growth in self-esteem was felt. Extracurricular involvement seemed to play a role in promoting this "good feeling."

Feeling good about yourself. Throughout the majority of the interviews, the participants exuded confidence when discussing their participation in extracurricular activities. However, further analysis disclosed that this confidence was not always the norm for these participants. For some, before they were involved in any type of extracurricular activity, different feelings may have existed. For example, several participants recalled how nervous they were about the possibility of not being good enough or with the potential of not being accepted by members already involved in specific activities. One student said, "I thought I would get cut ... I was quite nervous. ... He [the instructor] said the good ones are going to stay and the bad ones are going to go." However, he added "I got in there and I had nothing to worry about. ... I got first part and everything. I became the section leader." The tone in his voice changed from quiet to confident. He was very satisfied with his accomplishments.

Self confidence and personal pride seemed to be linked with extracurricular involvement. When discussing their [the band's] victory in provincials, one student stated "it kind of makes us feel bigger and better" and "everyone was pretty proud." During the interview, this student referred several times to the band's winning of a provincial gold medal. Another student commented on how "students watch you in the activities. When you make a great dig and they cheer, you feel great." When discussing their part in decorating for a school dance, another student said, "I know a little about decorating and when people come out and say 'the decorations are great' ... it makes you feel good. ... I like that." A senior student also spoke very emotionally about the upcoming prom dance which she was coordinating. She said:

> Well for prom, after I make my little speech at the beginning, I'll just go see everyone dancing and see the room all decorated and it's going to be so nice.. I don't know, it's just to see that you have actually accomplished something. That the time that you have spent is worthwhile. That you did it for a purpose. You feel so good inside.

A sense of pride and personal satisfaction seemed to radiate from those young men and women who considered extracurricular activities a very important part of their high school experience. For them, these involvements were already creating special memories.

Memories. Involvement in extracurricular activities served to create many memories for participants. One student commented

> They [extracurricular activities] help make the best of your high school years. ... If I am involved in a group or with an organization with the school, I can look back and say 'yeh, I was on that and how much fun it was'. It's a good way to remember the school a lot better.

Another student said, "it [involvement] is a good way to remember the school a lot better because of all the good memories." A grade 12 student emotionally said:

> These are supposed to be the best days of our lives. Being involved in all this [grad council] has made this [school] better for me. I will never forget this school and all the memories.

Participating students felt that their involvement in extracurricular activities helped generate a sense of satisfaction by providing an opportunity to (a) explore personal interests, (b) learn new things, (c) enjoy activities other than academic pursuits, (d) develop new relationships, (e) receive personal gains, (f) feel good about themselves, and (g) create long lasting memories of their high school experience. Nonparticipants also appreciated this personal satisfaction felt by extracurricular participants.

With all these positive forces contributing to student involvement, why don't *all* students participate in extracurricular activities? The study revealed that just as there are several factors encouraging involvement, there are several factors discouraging it.

Factors Contributing to Non-involvement

> You know that you have to get that little slip of paper that says advanced diploma or what ever to go on to university. And then the money factor comes in. You need money to go anywhere so you have to find a job. Once you have those two, the extracurricular activities are kind of hard to fit in. The more work you do, the less activities you get to be in. You want to spend time with your friends, get away on the week-ends and it's kind of hard with everything going on.

This, and several other comments, illustrate that many students in these high schools were faced with difficult choices regarding whether they would become involved in extracurricular activities. Students suggested that if they

were able to be involved (or in some cases more involved), they would. Time seemed to be a major determining factor. Circumstances such as academic demands, personal commitment, peer influence, self-concept, financial concerns, and outside interests were forces that were seriously weighed before a final decision was reached.

Academic demands. A recurrent complaint from students was the issue of whether the time spent on extracurricular activities would jeopardize academic grades. A grade 10 nonparticipant confessed:

> I really put a lot of time into studying and that takes away some of the time - my free time - and if I did have higher grades then I wouldn't have to work on them so hard. Then I think that I would be in extracurricular activities.

Even students who were involved expressed concern about the effect of extracurricular involvement on their marks. When asked why she was in only one activity, a grade 10 student replied, "Well, I had to think about my grades. I had to keep my grades up and as much fun as activities are, I had to keep to a minimum what I did."

These academic demands seemed even more critical for grade 12 students. One nonparticipant stated quite emphatically:

> There's a point of whether your school marks (and how you are doing in school) are more important than extracurricular activities. I know that to me personally, my marks are more important than whatever I do after school. So, if your activities were affecting your marks in school, I don't think that [involvement] is the way to go.

Another very involved grade 12 student admitted that "a lot of time towards studies sometimes slips away." The general consensus of the interviewed students was that in order to prevent this slippage from occurring, a

commitment to school attendance and the making up of missed work was necessary. One grade 12 student said:

> Our band is missing three days of school and our marks have to be good. If our marks aren't good, we can't go. ... School comes before the activity so if our marks aren't good and we aren't attending class, we shouldn't be allowed to go.

The students noted that both students and supervisors placed a greater emphasis on academic endeavors than on extracurricular involvement. Even those students who were "only in school for the sports" had to comply with the rules for extracurricular involvement. The participants had to maintain certain averages and attend regularly in order to be eligible for extracurricular activities. One grade 12 student stated:

> I was more active in grade 10 when I wrestled. We practiced two hours every day and competed in seven week-end tournaments. With what [academic average] I need to get into college, I can't do that anymore. Because I want to do very well in school, I spend upwards to about 11 or 12 o'clock on my studies. I wake up at 7:30 in the morning and there is just no time [for lots of involvement in extracurricular activities]. Because of the time that is needed in grade 12 [for academic success], it's not going to get any easier for the kids in the future. There is probably going to be less involvement with extracurricular activities in the future.

He chose to belong only to the science club where "we only meet at noon hours and besides it has really helped me with my science courses."

Because of commitments to their academic pursuits, some students were not prepared to become obligated to certain extracurricular activities. Was the required commitment to an activity a factor in determining the student's degree of involvement in extracurricular activities?

Commitment. Students continually noted that extracurricular activities required a substantial time commitment. One nonparticipant (grade 10) said:

> My friend's parents got her her own instrument because she promised them and she promised herself that she would put the time in that was needed. She kept going and then this year at the beginning of the first semester she enrolled in concert choir and band and all that stuff. She has the time and she is willing to do it.

This concept of "being willing to do it" implies sacrifice. When discussing her commitment to the fashion show, one grade 12 student stated:

> We had to go around and ask merchants in [different cities] if they would lend us their clothes and be a sponsor and stuff like that. It took week-ends and week nights, telephone calls, letters to go out into the mail for parents, making posters, taking up your spares. It's very time consuming. Sometimes, I wonder if it's all worth it.

With obvious concern and disappointment, a second grade 12 participant added, "I'm not home a lot for even having supper with the family. ... I give that up, I know." These types of feelings reinforced the depth of the dilemmas that these students faced regarding the sacrifices required to fulfill the commitment to an extracurricular activity. Similar responsibilities were addressed with relation to sports teams, band, choral, drama and other school groups. One grade 10 participant said:

> Last night I had track and field practice. I was so tired. Sometimes you just don't want to do it because you just feel very sore and stiff and sick. But, you have to do it. ... If I'm in something I've got to show up all the time. I'm committed to it.

Another simply stated "It takes a lot of your time. You have to be dedicated." Several other students commented on the necessity to weigh the required dedication against the potential benefits before a final decision about participation can be reached. A grade 12 suggested that:

> It's your choice. The way I figure it, when you come to something [extracurricular activity] you say, 'yes, I want to be a part of this. Yes, I want to make this work.' So, you are kind of pledging your time and yourself.

> You are saying that I think this is worthy to be behind so I'm going to stick with you. There is a kind of responsibility that goes with it.

For one reason or another, nonparticipants were not prepared to make the required commitment of specific extracurricular activities. This reinforced Rizzo's (1969, p. 184) contention that "students must be willing to accept the many responsibilities that are associated with the program." One grade 10 nonparticipant declared, "They [supervisors] want too much of my time. I just want to hang around and do nothing with my friends at the pool hall after school." How much of a factor are peers in determining whether a student becomes involved in extracurricular activities?

Peer influence. Friends seemed to have two different effects on student involvement in extracurricular activities. When very involved students were asked why they thought other students got involved in extracurricular activities, a common response was because their friends were involved. One student (grade 12) confessed "Some people get involved because their friends are involved. I know that I drag some of my friends out to things. Sometimes people will go [into an extracurricular activity] just because their friends go in." Although there was some supposition that students may get involved because their friends were involved, several nonparticipants did not get involved because of peer influence. One grade 12 student was very remorseful when asked why he didn't get involved in grade 10. He said:

> I was interested in football but my friends kept saying I was uncool to hang around with the jocks. If my friends would have been jocks, I might have played football. I really like football.

Other students also noted that there was strong peer pressure to not become involved in extracurricular activities. A grade 10 nonparticipant stated:

> Usually only the smart people, like the nerds or something go into those type of groups like library club or something like that. They don't want to be looked upon from their friends - oh look at this idiot, he is going into this. ... It may be hard to join an extracurricular activity because of what your friends may think.

Still, others suggested that it wasn't that their friends were "pressuring" them into or out of extracurricular activities but that the influence of their friends was a major factor in making their decision. One grade 12 nonparticipant said:

> I didn't bother to get involved more or less because my friends didn't either. A couple of them were interested in it [participation] but never actually went out and did it. So I just thought 'well they're not, so I'm not.'

Several different types of peer influence appeared instrumental in determining the degree of involvement. What was consistent, was that irrespective of the nature of the peer influence, students would, if given the opportunity, warn incoming grade 9 students "not to let your friends talk you out of what you really want to do." One student (grade 10 nonparticipant) would say to the grade 9s:

> Don't go [into extracurricular activities] just because your friends are going. Most people do that for the sake of being with their friends all the time instead of being by themselves. Don't do that just because of your friends. If you want to go in, you have to want it yourself.

A grade 12 nonparticipant, regretting his nonparticipation, would suggest:

> I don't want to happen to you what happened to me. Don't listen to your friends if they are discouraging you or something. You are going to meet new friends at all these clubs.

Whether their friends were involved or not, extracurricular activities were an opportunity for students to become members of a group. For some, this need to belong was important in promoting a feeling of acceptance and self-confidence. Were there other factors related to self-concept that created dilemmas for these high school students?

Self-concept. It was suggested earlier in the chapter that students gained a sense of confidence from their involvement in extracurricular activities. Further analysis indicated that the fear of "not being good enough" kept students out of extracurricular activities. Several students admitted to wanting to be in a specific activity but also to questioning whether they had the qualities or capabilities necessary for success in the activity (i.e. size, skill, personality, etc.). A grade 10 nonparticipant stated that they felt students don't become involved because "we don't think that we are good enough to do those things [extracurricular activities]. We don't have the abilities. I think some of us are just shy."

This, and the perceived fear of breaking away from an established peer group (and in turn not being accepted by a new group), seemed to be a major issue, especially for grade 10 students. One grade 12 student recalled:

> I was interested in students council but I can remember thinking that that was something that I could never belong to because only certain people belong to that and that they [students council members] would never accept me. If I did run [for a students council office] and I didn't win, how would I feel? I just thought it would be easier not to run.

Several students recalled being in grade 10 and wanting to be involved but not having the confidence in themselves to try, and/or fearing failure. A grade 10 proposed, "You have to be a risk-taker and just say 'who cares'." Unfortunately, this was not easy for a lot of these students. A grade 12 participant, who was involved in one activity but who regretted not being involved in others, noted:

> In grade 10, I was kind of nervous. I thought that I would never have a chance [of making the badminton team] in my life. But in grade 12 you are the king kind of thing. A grade 12 can go out and do anything he wants. We are not the little grade 10s, we are the big grade 12s. Anything that a grade 12 wants to do, he'll do.

This student implied that just being a senior in the school helped alleviate these feelings of insecurity and subsequent questions about becoming involved. A grade 10 student agreed and also added that "they [grade 10 students] needed to know the school better before they got involved in more activities." This may have been an important factor contributing to the higher (41) percent of grade 10 students (as compared to 32 percent of the grade 12 students) not being involved in at least one extracurricular activity.

Even with the apparent benefits of gaining self-confidence, a substantial percentage of students were still not involved. What were they doing with their spare time? One issue which surfaced with over 50 percent of the interviewees was a conflict between extracurricular participation and part-time employment. Financial concerns seemed to be another factor which influenced nonparticipation.

Financial concerns. There seemed to be a strong relationship between having a part-time job and its effect on the involvement of grade 12 students. Although there was some reference to working while in grade 10, most conflicts with work seemed to surface in grade 12. A grade 12 nonparticipant said, "This year, because it is my grade 12 year and I'm hoping to go to university next year, I have taken on two part-time jobs ... I don't have time for much else." "I live on my own so I have to work everyday after school and every week-end as well so I don't have much time," contributed another grade 12 nonparticipant. For some students, financial concerns were paramount in their decision that they just could not afford the time away from a job in order to participate in extracurricular activities.

Still others said that they simply needed the money to do the things they wanted to do. One student (grade 12) stated:

> I'd like to get into things like badminton and volleyball but I found that when I hit grade 12, I didn't have enough time because of a job. ... I wanted the job because I like to do things with my friends and it always seems to cost so much.

To some, having a part-time job seemed a necessity, while to others it was a choice determined by personal interest. Choosing to be involved in outside interests played a significant role in determining the degree of extracurricular involvement for certain students.

Outside interests. Several students commented on their involvement in activities outside the school. The variety of activities included friends, 4H, hockey, piano, baseball, BMX racing, church, cadets, swimming, ringette, and jobs.

Students consistently commented on the lack of time available for in-school extracurricular activities for those individuals who chose to become involved in activities outside the school. There was, however, not much regret shown by these students. The general feeling of these students was that if more time was available, they would be involved in extracurricular activities. A grade 10 nonparticipant noted:

> I'm taking my grade 10 piano exam this year and it takes about 2 or 3 hours of practice a night. My music is very important to me. I want to graduate a semester early which means more homework and I teach 7 kids piano every week. Besides, I run the house because I live in a single parent family. I just don't have time.

Some students chose to spend their spare time in activities that were of more interest or importance to them. This, they did often at the exclusion of school extracurricular activities. In several instances it meant being involved in as many extracurricular activities as possible while still maintaining outside

interests. When asked what held her back from getting more involved, a grade 10 student stated:

> I think the time more than anything. I'm very busy in activities that are not involved with the school so I don't have much time to get involved. I really wanted to be on the basketball team. I was thinking about doing that but I couldn't. I didn't have the time. ... I chose the ones that were more important to me.

Students that were involved in extracurricular activities were unified in the belief that those students who were not involved "set priorities other than joining school clubs. They have other things to do." There appeared to be little criticism of these choices. Only one student suggested that "they [nonparticipants] probably just don't care."

Today's students have many and varied interests, not the least of which is being involved in school sponsored extracurricular activities. Throughout their years in the high school, students faced several dilemmas with respect to extracurricular involvement. They were continually exposed to antagonistic forces. Students recognized that personal satisfaction could be gained through participation but, they also realized that other important factors influenced their nonparticipation. Even facing difficult personal decisions about individual involvement, students noted that extracurricular activities appeared to play a critical role in establishing a positive school culture.

School Culture

Individual participants were not the only benefactors from the involvement of students in extracurricular activities. The school, a collective unit of students and staff, reaped many benefits. It appeared that extracurricular activities made the school a more interesting and exciting place to be. They helped create a positive school identity and a subsequent pride in

the school. Extracurricular activities fostered improved student-teacher relationships, which when coupled with the school being a more interesting and exciting place to be, established a positive school ethos. The students liked their school and were proud of its' extracurricular reputation. Extracurricular participants wanted to come to school and felt that extracurricular activities were instrumental in establishing that feeling.

Alleviating boredom. According to these high school students, one of the criteria necessary for liking their school was that the school should be "a fun place to come." For them, extracurricular activities seemed to supply that important "extra" needed to alleviate the rigors of academic study. They felt that these activities contributed to a positive atmosphere in the schools. Students believed that this, in turn, led to reduced absenteeism because students wanted to come to school.

In discussing the role extracurricular activities play in their school, several students suggested that "without these activities, school would be boring." Two grade 10 nonparticipants hypothesized that students get involved because "it [extracurricular activities] gives them something to do." One of the students suggested that "everyone would be really bored with school if they [extracurricular activities] weren't there." A grade 12 student concurred: "It gives me something extra besides Chemistry and Biology and English and all that. It [academic work] gets kind of boring after awhile." This thought surfaced with several other grade 12 students. An active participant said:

> They [extracurricular activities] make school go easier because it is something to look forward to at the end of school. If you have a practice it's like an initiative to get through school or get rewards.

A grade 12 nonparticipant postulated "the ones that aren't involved are basically bored the whole time."

Students believed that extracurricular activities seemed to alleviate school boredom and supplied a climate which may contribute to keeping students in school. The opportunity to take part in extracurricular activities induced some students to want to come to school. One grade 10 participant stated:

> People without extracurricular activities may feel differently about school. They may have no reason to go to school. In the morning they wake up and say 'Oh, I don't even have to go to school.' If you have an extracurricular activity, you go to school just for that sometimes. You want to be there for that. I think that if you are involved, you'll want to go to school. You wake up in the morning and go 'alright school.' You want to go to school just so you can go to the extracurricular activity.

Other grade 10 students agreed with this student's perception. Grade 12 students seemed to concur with these feelings to an even greater extent. One grade 12 student mentioned that "a lot of kids I know come to school just so that they can be on the team. Sports is all they are up to. They mostly come just to play sports." Extracurricular activities may be an instrumental factor in keeping some students registered in school. One grade 12 student indicated, "It [involvement] would almost be an excuse to stay in school because the motivation they [students] would have would be to come to school just to be involved in the extracurricular activities."

Some students believed that individuals involved in extracurricular activities attended classes more regularly. One student (grade 10 nonparticipant) said, "People that aren't involved at all are more prone to skip and things. They're hardly ever here." A grade 12 nonparticipant agreed:

> I think that the kids that aren't involved in extracurricular activities are the ones that skip the most. I think they

> miss the most school. The ones that are involved are out doing stuff whenever they have these activities. That way they have had their fun and they are ready to go back to work.

Most participating students stated that being involved had reduced their absenteeism. For example, one student noted how she reconsidered skipping a class because of a meeting she had at noon that day. Another grade 12 stated:

> Most of the people that are involved in extracurricular activities are very school conscious and they go to class regularly and have very few absences. ... They seem to get involved in school and that makes them want to be involved with their classes.

Students involved in extracurricular activities seemed to have better attendance in school because of a sense of wanting or having to be in school. One grade 12 nonparticipant said:

> Usually people who don't have any activities either don't like the school or don't like being there. If you don't like being there you are not going to learn anything and you are not going to want to achieve anything at school so you will probably get kicked out or just not attend. ... The friends that I've been talking about [students who don't like school and who wouldn't become involved even if something that interested them was offered] are either failing or being kicked out.

Another grade 12 went so far as to say, "extracurricular activities can be a kind of crutch to help kids get through school."

Only one student stated that they felt that there was no relationship between a student's attendance at school and their involvement in extracurricular activities. This grade 12 participant stated:

> If you are interested in an extracurricular activity, then you will go to that extracurricular activity. If you are interested in school, then you will go to class. You don't have to be involved in extracurricular activities to come to school.

Why were the other students so adamant that extracurricular activities made school more attractive? One factor seemed to be that extracurricular

involvement encouraged students to come to school, students felt that these activities contributed to a positive school identity.

School identity. Students perceived that a strong sense of school pride developed as a result of involvement in school extracurricular activities. This was especially true as the activities became more and more successful.

Both participants and nonparticipants felt that extracurricular activities were important to them as students proud of their school. One grade 12 nonparticipant who was active in several out of school activities stated, "Without them [extracurricular activities] there is no bonding and school spirit." When asked what she meant by school spirit, she replied, "Being proud that I go there [the school]. Like going to Edmonton to visit friends and talking about my school to them." A second nonparticipant added:

> The teams wear the jerseys and they [the players] go 'Go Sabres' and everyone in the school thinks that their school is the best. It gives everyone a sort of pride to go to that school. I like to listen to the announcements and find out how the volleyball or football team did. I'm interested in those things. I'm glad our school does so well when we go up against other schools.

Extracurricular participants seemed to be even more emphatic about how proud they were of their school's reputation. One grade 12 student triumphantly stated, "We are famously known for our volleyball and basketball." Another grade 12 participant said, "It's like you want to go to the other schools and go 'na-na-na-na'. We may be small but we'll get you." A third student added, "People in Edmonton knowing our little ol' school, that's a big amazement." In an excited tone she then added, "I was down in the States over Easter holidays and I was wearing my school jacket and people in Montana have even heard of our town. Wow, what a feeling."

Not only did students perceive a real sense of school pride resulting from each school's extracurricular reputation, but a sense of school unity and belonging was also linked to success in extracurricular activities. King and Peart (1990, p. 78) reported that in **every one** of the 14 schools researched, students involved in one or more activities responded positively to the statement "I feel 'I belong' in this school." This sense of belonging and unity was illustrated in one of the schools when a grade 12 participant noted:

> A couple of years ago when the volleyball team won the championship, I was on the cheer leading squad. The guys all got together first and had their cry and their joy and then the cheer leaders and the guys got together and we were all happy and the school just came together. The school was packed and it was just one mass of people crying and shouting. It was so overwhelming. I'll never forget it. If those things were gone, I don't think that we would have a school. At least not one that we could be proud of.

This sense of excitement and togetherness in the school does not necessarily have to be as a result of a provincial championship. One student who doesn't play sports but "enjoys going out to the games with my friends" commented, "when you go to a volleyball or a basketball game, all the students are together cheering. That's exciting."

Extracurricular activities seemed to provide a common thread which creates a positive school ethos for those students choosing to support them. Although one student suggested that "some of them [students] don't have a pride in the school and they hate the school and they won't do anything with it [school]," nonparticipants and participants alike felt that extracurricular activities brought the school together and made it a fun place to be. A grade 10 nonparticipant added "They [extracurricular activities] make everyone feel good about your school." A grade 12 participant stated:

> I like the environment a lot more because I can just go out and watch a basketball game. Cheer them on.

> It [having extracurricular activities] builds a better atmosphere. Extracurricular activities make school more interesting, more worthwhile for kids to come to instead of dropping out. ... We want to make it a fun place to be.

Favorable student-teacher relationships which students felt were fostered through extracurricular activities seemed also to contribute to a positive school climate.

Student-teacher relationships. Most of the extracurricular activities were supervised by teachers. They, and other staff members, also actively participated in extracurricular activities. This, in general, seemed to be important to the students. Several students mentioned that they liked to see their teachers involved in school activities. "It makes you feel more human. You don't just feel like a number," stated one student as she discussed a teacher that helped out in badminton. She added:

> I think it is kind of neat that she is involved. ... She gets to know you better. If you are playing badminton you kind of joke around and she is there and she's laughing. You talk to her a little bit more than you normally would if she was just your teacher. It's fun to see their [the teacher's] other side. It makes it more personable.

For students that liked school, extracurricular activities contributed to a positive school climate by relieving boredom and creating a positive school identity for the students. And, as discussed earlier in the chapter, students recognized that personal satisfaction could be gained through participation. But, they also realized that other important factors could influence nonparticipation. For many, the decisions about participation were not easy, as evidenced by their obvious regret at not being involved (or more involved) during their tenure at the school.

Attitude Changes

Students appeared to experience a general change in attitude about extracurricular involvement as they spent more time in a school. Students were asked "If you were given the chance to re-live your time at the school, would you do anything differently regarding your extracurricular involvement?" Almost unanimously, the grade 10 students stated that they would have become involved sooner. One energetic young student emphatically stated "I'd get more involved. It's fun. It keeps me busy." A grade 10 nonparticipant echoed the sentiments of several others:

> I regret not getting involved. I'm not very good in the school sports but there are other things. There is something for everybody. There is. I think everybody should get involved. Now that I understand what the high school is like and more what the expectations are, I intend to get involved next year.

Students felt an overall sense of regret that they did not become more involved during their high school days. Statements like (a) "I wish I would have started [intramurals] earlier in order to meet more people," (b) "I really would have liked to do that," and (c) "If you weren't involved I think that you would regret it when you are in grade 12 like I am myself" illustrate the nature of this regret.

At the time when individual decisions were being made about whether to participate, most students did not consider the possible feelings of regret which may result from reduced participation in extracurricular activities. One grade 12 participant, who was not involved in grade 10 or 11, stated:

> Now that I'm in grade 12, I understand that [the importance of having memories of your high school] more cuz grade 10's and 11's have that extra year or two years to work up to it. Now that it is our year, we want to make it the best that it can be. I want to do my part as much as I can and I want to do it in graduation. That's where I come in in grade 12.

I want to help make it a fun place to be. When you're involved, school is a great place to be. I like school way more now that I'm doing things. I wish that I would have been involved more before. I just didn't care.

Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of student involvement and student perceptions of the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling.

The initial "degree of participation" survey revealed that an average of 63 % of the students in the two selected high school were involved in a minimum of one extracurricular activity. The data did show a substantial disparity between the two participating schools. The participation varied from 59 % in one school to 68 % in the second. It should be noted that students in school number Two made reference to getting extra marks on their report cards for participating in intramural activities. This may have been a consequential factor. What was observed was that as students progressed from grade 10 to grade 12, their degree of participation increased. Not only were a higher percentage of students involved, but students tended to be involved in more activities in their grade 12 year.

In discussing personal feelings about individual involvement, four interesting themes emerged from the data analysis. First, students involved in extracurricular activities felt a sense of personal satisfaction as a result of being able to explore their personal interests, enhance learning experiences, enjoy the activities, develop new relationships, receive personal benefits, feel good about themselves, and create memories of their high school years.

Second, even though students realized the benefits of extracurricular involvement, students in these high schools were faced with several factors with potential to constrain their involvement. Time seemed to be the major factor. Elements such as academic demands, financial concerns, outside

interests, commitment, peer influence, and self-concept presented situations which were seriously weighed before a final decision was reached.

Third, individual participants were not the only benefactors of the involvement of students in extracurricular activities. The school reaped many benefits. It appeared that extracurricular activities made the school a more interesting and exciting place to be. Students believed these activities helped create a positive school identity and a subsequent pride in the school. They felt that extracurricular activities seemed to foster improved student-teacher relationships, which when coupled with the above mentioned factors, helped establish a positive school ethos. The students liked their schools and were proud of their extracurricular reputations. Extracurricular participants wanted to come to school and felt that extracurricular activities were instrumental in establishing that feeling.

Finally, whether or not students participated in extracurricular activities, they experienced a general feeling of regret that they hadn't become involved (or more involved) when the opportunity was available.

CHAPTER V
Reflections

The purpose of this study was to investigate, and gain an understanding of students' attitudes about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling. Over one half of the high school students surveyed were involved in some form of extracurricular activity. What stimulated this involvement? Conversely, what inhibited student involvement? These and other research questions were examined.

During the conduct of the study several interesting student attitudes were observed. In this chapter a review of the data analysis as it relates to the six research questions is presented. This is followed by a discussion of personal reflections on the data and methodology of the study. Next, twelve inferences about students' attitudes are presented. Finally, possible implications for theory, further research and practice are offered.

Reflections on the Research Questions

Students believed extracurricular participation to be important to the whole school as well as to students involved in the activities. All of the participants felt they benefited from their involvement in extracurricular activities.

Research Question 1: Reasons for Student Involvement *What are the reasons for high school students' involvement or lack of involvement in extracurricular activities?*

Miller, as early as 1954, and King and Peart, as recently as 1990, proposed that one of the roles of extracurricular activities was to provide

opportunities for the pursuance of established interests along with the development of new interests. Of course it is tenuous to infer from this that the only reason that people were involved in these school based activities was because of an interest in them. Even so, it seemed that having an interest was critical. This was especially true for those students not involved in any extracurricular activity. Nonparticipants continually alluded to not being interested in the activities available through the school. For example, one student stated, "There is nothing there [the school] that interests me." A second student added, "I have no desire to become involved." This concept of having an interest in an activity seemed paramount in determining whether a student became involved.

Interestingly, even with a strong personal interest some students limited their involvement. Peer influence seemed to be a key factor in students' decisions not to join a specific team or club. One student who admitted to liking football and who wanted to play football said, "I think I might have gone [played football] but my friends just said I was uncool to hang around with the jocks and so I never played." A second student concurred: "People that I'm friends with are not friends with people who get involved. I felt a little bit of peer pressure not to become involved. Just little things. They'd say 'what a loser club'."

It was also clear that even students who were involved felt a concern that being involved in extracurricular activities cost them valuable time with their friends. One participant admitted, "Sometimes friendships [previous to the activity] tend to be put aside." Other students felt the peer pressure so strongly that they joined an activity just to be with their friends.

Students noted that friends and relationships are very important to high school students. For some, old friendships were maintained by students either taking part or abstaining from extracurricular activities. However, these same

students suggested that participants of a particular activity established and nurtured strong friendships regardless of whether the relationships existed prior to the activity. Several students mentioned that one of the reasons they became involved was "to meet new people and make new friends."

Most participants hypothesized that a lack of participation was due to feelings of "shyness" and "nervousness." This was supported by several interviewees whose advise to incoming grade 9s was "get involved in high school activities. Even though you might be nervous, you have nothing to lose." When asked if she would do anything differently if she had a chance to re-live her three years at high school, one nonparticipant stated "I would try to overcome my shyness and I would have tried out for the basketball team. I would have liked to be in it [basketball]."

This comment suggests that students participated because they enjoyed the activity. One student stated, "it [extracurricular involvement] makes your whole year way more fun because you are involved with the school." When extracurricular activities were undertaken, it was considered to be fun. If students couldn't see where they would have any fun, they didn't become involved. Nonparticipants also appreciated the enjoyment other students experienced through participation in extracurricular activities. When asked about the possibility of cancelling all extracurricular activities in the school, all participants and several nonparticipants said they would be upset or disappointed. Both participants and nonparticipants recognized that there were personal benefits associated with being involved. These ranged from the opportunity to travel to the possibilities of earning scholarships to helping find a job. The literature supports that this is an important factor in influencing students' decisions to participate. Rossow (1990) talked about the opportunity to travel. King and Peart (1990) discussed the role of extracurricular

involvement in providing personal gain through recognition of student success and an accompanying growth in self-esteem.

Although most students believed that extracurricular participation was beneficial, they still faced difficult decisions about the degree to which they would become involved. For many, an increase in part-time employment seemed to dictate the amount of their extracurricular involvement. Again, this phenomenon is recognized in the literature. For example, Gholsan (1976), as cited in Gholsan and Buser (1983) reported "that part-time employment is the most frequently identified (89 percent) reason that students do not participate in activity programs." One student stated, "most definitely there are a lot of kids right now that realize that money is a big thing so they are going to be going out and working." Some of the students interviewed for this study were able to balance a part-time job and extracurricular involvement while others chose to sacrifice either one or the other.

Another dilemma felt by many students related to conflicting demands for time. They felt "pulled" between their commitment to extracurricular involvement and their commitment to academic study. One student stated, "Well, I had to think about my grades. I have to keep my grades up and as much fun as activities are, I had to keep to a minimum what I did [extra class activities]." This concern is manifest in the onset of diploma exams in Alberta coupled with the Alberta Education's recent increase in the mandatory requirements for graduation. In addition, post-secondary institutions have increased the minimum standards for acceptance into many areas of study.

Students identified two other reasons why they did not participate in extracurricular activities. First, students were not prepared to make the commitment required by several of the specific extracurricular activities; and Second, several students were involved in activities outside the school.

King and Peart (1990) stated that previous research had shown that extracurricular activities were said to discourage students from participating in out-of-school community-based activities. Their research, however, showed a high correlation (.58) between the two. They concluded that "participating in the life of a school creates a willingness to participate in activities out of school" (p. 79). The data collected in this study did not support or contest this position. Some students were committed to out-of-school interests at the expense of school extracurricular activities while others were actively involved in both.

Students chose to participate because they felt that involvement in extracurricular activities gave them a chance to explore personal interests, develop new relationships or strengthen existing friendships, enjoy themselves, and receive some personal gain. Students who chose not to become involved did so because of one or a combination of several factors: (a) an allegiance to friends, (b) time restraints as a result of part-time employment, (c) academic demands, (d) required commitment, or (e) other outside interests. Also, low self-confidence seemed a critical factor in determining whether a student became involved in extracurricular activities. One student simply stated, "You have to be a risk taker."

Research Question 2: Importance to Students *Why are or are not extracurricular activities important to students?*

Individuals that participated in specific extracurricular activities felt that a strong sense of friendship evolved from sharing this common experience. One student said, "now that we [she and one other girl] are doing football together, we are getting to know each other better. You are going to have a better friendship with her." As noted earlier, peer influence was very important in determining whether an individual became involved in an extracurricular

activity. Being with their friends was important to these high school students. This seemed to be a critical component necessary for students to fully enjoy the activity. And, enjoying the activity was important to these students. Beside enjoying the activity per se, the students enjoyed the positive feelings about themselves that resulted from their involvement in an activity.

Ridgway (1986) discussed the feelings of positive self-esteem that students experienced through participation in a high school drama club. Other scholars such as King and Peart (1990), Goodlad (1984) and Sergiovanni (1984) added that students involved in extracurricular activities "feel good." These comments illustrate the level of self-confidence some students gained through extracurricular participation: (a) "you feel good because you have proven yourself;" (b)"just stand up for what you believe in;" and (c)"it makes you kind of proud that you are participating." These comments suggest that the potential for enhancing self-concept through participation in extracurricular activities was important to students. Students also suggested that participation in extracurricular activities was important for their school.

Research Question 3: School Cultures *How do extracurricular activities contribute to the culture (behavioral norms, assumptions, philosophies and beliefs) of a school?*

Goodlad (1984), Sergiovanni (1984), and King and Peart (1990) proposed that extracurricular activities contribute to the development of a "strong and binding culture" in high schools. Students identified two components of a positive school atmosphere which they believed were enhanced through extracurricular activities. They were that extracurricular activities alleviate boredom and make school fun and exciting, and that extracurricular programs facilitate a school identity for students. Students who

participated in these activities seemed to enjoy school. This was supported by comments such as "you look forward to going to school," "without extracurricular activities there would be no reason to go to school," "they [students] are going to be more enthusiastic--just more excited to come [to school]," and "school just wouldn't be the same without it." One nonparticipant suggested that "usually people who don't have any activities either don't like the school or don't like being there." One nonparticipant simply stated "I hate school."

However, most nonparticipants felt that "everyone would be really bored with school if they [extracurricular activities] weren't there." Was this a feeling typical for most high school students? Are extracurricular activities necessary to help establish a positive environment? Lightfoot (1983), when describing "six good American high schools" only discussed the role of extracurricular activities during her analysis of a private and an upper class school. In her discussion of inner city schools, foci like curriculum, parent involvement and racism groups were presented as integral components of "the good school." Do extracurricular activities play different roles in different types of schools?

One area conspicuous by its absence from the literature is the role of extracurricular activities in establishing a school identity. King and Peart (1990) reported a grade 10 female student as saying, "Our high school is known by most other schools as a 'loser' school. We lost our senior football team and hockey team." The data collected in this study suggested that extracurricular activities seemed to afford the opportunity for students to feel proud of their school. Schools are identified whether it be for academics, athletics or fine arts. Students believed that extracurricular activities influence perceptions about what kind of school their school is. The students of the two schools examined in this study seemed very proud of their schools' reputations in

extracurricular activities (i.e. band, volleyball, etc.). There was boasting and expressions of pride in being from these schools. Participants continually referred to "our school" and "we" while some nonparticipants said "they" when referring to the school or other students. Students who were active in school sponsored clubs, teams or services appeared to feel ownership of and commitment to the total organization. A female drama club member said:

> You feel that the rest of the cast are family. Even if you don't feel like spending 4 hours at rehearsal, you feel that you have to. You have chosen to take this on and it's your responsibility not to let all the others down. Besides, if you don't go and you don't learn your part, you will not do a good job and the school's name will be wrecked.

Students felt that the experiences shared through extracurricular involvement created special memories of their high school tenure.

Research Question 4: Student Relationships with Teachers *In what ways does involvement in extracurricular activities affect students' relationships with teachers?*

Several researchers have suggested that positive student-teacher relationships are fostered as a result of extracurricular involvement. For example, Ridgway (1984, p. 52) wrote about the "appreciation of me [the teacher] as someone more than just a lecturer/discussion leader/examiner." Participants in the current study concurred by suggesting that "teachers who supervised or participated in extracurricular activities related better to students." These comments (a) "You can talk to them easier;" (b) You could actually be a friend to him [a teacher] ;" and (c) "They [involved teachers] get to know you more personally" illustrate the nature of the student-teacher rapport established through extracurricular participation. However, all students did not agree on how they felt about being taught by a teacher that they knew was

involved in extracurricular activities. Several students stated that "it didn't matter if their teacher took part in school activities as long as they taught them the course." Other students said "I liked being taught by teachers that are involved." Conversely, two students expressed a concern about being taught by the teacher who supervised their extracurricular activity. A third student expressed her concern about teachers "favoring" students who were a part of their [the teacher's] extracurricular activity. Teachers involved in extra class activities must be aware of these perceptions as student-teacher rapport can easily be destroyed if these student (participant)-teacher (supervisor) relationships are abused.

Research Question 5: Student Attitudes About Attending School *In what ways does the involvement in extracurricular activities affect students' attitudes about attending school?*

Rossow (1990, p. 127) stated, "The extracurricular activity program (especially athletics) can be the reason for the school's existence in some communities. King and Peart (1990, p. 78) suggested that "a strong extracurricular program can often make the difference to whether a student remains in school or not." Students in the current study agreed. Statements like (a) " some students don't have any reason to go to school without extracurricular activities," and (b) "kids come to school just so that they can be on the team" support Rossow and King and Peart. Students believed that extracurricular participation tended to encourage them to come to school. Extracurricular programs appeared to have an effect on reducing drop-out rates by encouraging students to come to school. That students perceived there to be a high relationship between school attendance and extracurricular involvement is indicated by statements like (a) "People that aren't involved at all

are prone to skip. They're hardly ever here;" (b) "I think they [nonparticipants] miss the most school;" and (c) "Most of the people that are involved ... go to class regularly."

Research Question 6: Attitude Changes *Do attitudes about participation in extracurricular activities change from grade 10 to grade 12?*

High school students faced a number of dilemmas about participating in extracurricular activities. Students suggested that wrestling with insecurity (shyness or nervousness), academic demands, personal commitment, peer influence, financial concerns or outside interests were factors influencing their reduced involvement. They also expressed a general feeling of regret that some involvement (or in some cases more involvement) in extracurricular activities was not undertaken. Students agreed almost unanimously (three exceptions), that if given the chance to re-live their time at the school they would be more involved in extracurricular activities. They also hypothesized that they might change their type of involvement.

Grade 12 students commented that one of the reasons why their extracurricular involvement would be different was because the pressures of part-time employment and academic success were much stronger at the grade 12 level than at the grade 10 level. Consequently, they often regretted not getting involved (or more involved) in grade 10 and 11 when the pressures weren't as great. However, grade 10 students admitted to feelings of insecurity which inhibited their involvement. By the time some students felt comfortable enough with the school and it's expectations, many of them felt that they had missed their chance. One grade 12 offered:

> It kind of hurts sometimes but I guess I was late and missed out. In grade 10 I was shy and I was nervous. I thought I'd never make the volleyball team. Then in

> grade 11, all the players had gotten better and I had lost touch with the game. I just never went out.

Teachers and administrators should be aware of these perceptions as possible alterations to an activities program may help reduce the uncertainty for grade 10 students as well as reduce the time commitment for grade 12 students.

As I reflected on the nature and scope of this study, I realized how, to a very large extent, the data collected related to the research questions initially defined at the onset of the investigation. Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 68) suggest, "The analysis [of any investigation] indeed becomes more encompassing as new cases are presented." They refer to the term "working hypothesis" when discussing how analysis of new data results in "the developing theory usually becoming more refined" (p. 68). I believe that the working hypotheses revealed from my study will enrich the current understanding of student attitudes about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling.

Reflections on the Findings

The majority of current research has focussed on the benefits that high school students accrue through participation in school-based activities. My study suggested that students believe that high school participants reap a bumper crop of benefits from extracurricular involvement.

However, in addition to the many individual benefits gained, students perceived extracurricular activities to play a role in creating a certain school ethos. With the exception of King and Peart (1990), the most recent scholars to address this facet of school sponsored extracurricular programs, there is little information about how extracurricular activities influence the atmosphere and overall culture in today's high schools.

As mentioned earlier, scholars tended to agree on the many advantages available to high school students who take part in extracurricular programs. However, what has been of significant interest to some researchers is the question "Knowing that students are exposed to a plethora of advantages resulting from extracurricular involvement, why are fewer and fewer students choosing to become involved?" The research on this question has resulted in a substantial list of reasons why students do not become involved. My study bore out the findings of scholars such as Vornberg (1982) and Gholsan (1976).

The questionnaire survey showed a higher percentage of grade 12 students (as compared to grade 10 students) involved in at least one extracurricular activity. This may be due, in part, to the high drop-out rate of nonparticipants. King and Peart (1990, p. 78) suggested that students who are involved in extracurricular activities are more likely to remain in school and be successful in academic pursuits. It then seems reasonable to assume that many of the student drop-outs between grade 10 and grade 12 were nonparticipants. This could account for the higher percentages of participating grade 12s.

In summary, both in the literature and throughout this study several reasons for non-involvement in extracurricular activities have been identified. Considering that these sources also strongly support that personal gains result from participation, I expected to find that students involved in extracurricular activities would have more positive comments than their nonparticipant peers. Interestingly, this was not the case. Both groups praised the presence of extracurricular activities in their school. Was I missing something? Perhaps extracurricular activities have become such an integral component of high schools that most students feel that without these activities their schools "would not be the same."

Reflections on the Methodology

As mentioned earlier, I was concerned that nonparticipants may not have been well enough represented among those responding to the questionnaire and among those I interviewed. My first concern centered on the percentage of questionnaire surveys completed by the respective schools. One school had a return of 91 % while the second was only 67 %. What might have accounted for this difference? I found out that in the school with the 91 % completion rate the administrator personally went around to every room to check whether the questionnaires had been completed. The other administrator relied on his teaching staff to collect and return the questionnaires. This procedural difference may have influenced the completion rate.

The school with the higher return rate had the lower participation rate (59 % as compared to 68 % for the school with the lower return rate). I wondered if a high proportion of the students who did not complete the surveys were nonparticipants. One of the school principals thought this might be the case. He commented that "the students who did not complete the surveys were from non-academic classes and they *probably* [italics added] had no involvement." If this were indeed true, it is understandable why one school had a substantially greater proportion of participants than did the other. Considering the high percentage of students who did not return the questionnaire, I must ask myself if the data are a true reflection of the percentage of students involved in extracurricular activities, especially in the school with only 67 % of the questionnaires completed.

Another factor which may have influenced the difference in participation rate could be that the school with the higher percentage of participants awarded marks for involvement in extracurricular activities. This was not the

case in the other school. This factor may have induced an increase in extracurricular participation.

I also believe that there were strengths related to the manner in which students were selected for participation in this study. I am, for example, comfortable that the selection of grade 12 and grade 10 students was representative of these schools. I believe that by interviewing grade 12 students, a complete picture of their attitudes about extracurricular involvement was attained. Throughout the interviews, each grade 12 student was asked to reflect back to when they were in grade 10 and grade 11. They were asked to share how they remember feeling about their involvement (or lack of involvement) in extracurricular activities at that time. In order to see if these grade 12 recollections were indicative of the attitudes of current grade 10s, several grade 10 students were interviewed. The grade 12 remembrances were remarkably similar to the perceptions of the current grade 10 students.

By interviewing both grade 10 and grade 12 students, I felt comfortable I had compiled a "thick" data base of high school students' attitudes and perceptions about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling.

However, when I found out both principals had asked for volunteers, in lieu of recommending "a cross section of students," I questioned if I was working with the purposive sample I had intended. In discussing this with the administrators, one stated, "the kids that are involved in school activities tend to volunteer for things like this more than kids who are not involved."

In order to address this concern, I interviewed two students who were identified as probably never wanting to become involved. These two "extra interviewees" reflected similar views to those of the other students interviewed. Because of this, my concern about the nature of the students involved in the study was alleviated somewhat.

Inferences

Several inferences regarding student attitudes about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling can be drawn from the data collected and the preceding discussion of the data in relationship to the literature.

1. Over one-half of the high school students surveyed are involved in at least one extracurricular activity.

2. A higher percentage of grade 12 students are involved in extracurricular activities than are their grade 10 counterparts.

3. Several factors may contribute to students becoming involved in extracurricular activities. These include opportunities to explore personal interests, develop new relationships (or strengthen existing friendships), enjoy themselves, and receive some personal gain.

4. Students may choose not to participate in extracurricular activities because of an allegiance to friends or because of time constraints which result from part-time employment, academic demands, required commitment or other outside interests. Many grade 10 students seemed to face the added challenge of apprehension about being in a new and usually larger school.

5. Extracurricular activities seem to be deemed important by students because a strong sense of friendship may evolve from sharing these common experiences. In addition, extracurricular involvement facilitates students feeling good about themselves.

6. For many students, the presence of extracurricular activities in a school alleviates boredom and makes school fun and exciting.

7. The presence of extracurricular activities in a school contributes to the perception of a positive school identity for most students.

8. Students who were active in school sponsored clubs, teams or services probably feel ownership of and commitment to the activity.

9. Experiences shared through extracurricular involvement may provide special memories for many high school students.

10. Students may perceive teachers who supervise or participate in extracurricular activities to relate better with students.

11. Students who are involved in extracurricular activities may attend classes more regularly.

12. If given the chance to re-live their time at the school, most students would be more involved in extracurricular activities.

Implications for Research and Practice

Several implications for theory and research as well as for practice can be drawn from the inferences or "working hypotheses" presented above.

Research

Any study is subject to methodological concerns. This study attempted to provide an in-depth view of selected grade 10 and grade 12 students' attitudes toward the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling. Considering the possibility that the study may have focussed on the attitudes, feelings and perceptions of those grade 10 and 12 students who were considered by the administration to be the "better clientele" of the two mid-sized rural high schools, the study may not realistically reflect the attitudes of **all** high school students. It is important to use caution when transferring the results of a study of a small, possibly biased sample to not only the larger population of the school but to other schools of varying size, nature and locale. Exploring the attitudes of grade 11 students as well as a more varied selection of student clientele (i.e. high school drop-outs) may prove fruitful research. Since Lightfoot (1983) alluded to the significance of extracurricular activities in

only certain types of schools, exploring schools with different reputations may also prove beneficial to our understanding of students' attitudes.

It is important to use prudence when interpreting students' perceptions. The students not only provided their general feelings but sometimes extrapolated to include how they thought **others** might feel or think about extracurricular participation. When people are talking about their perceptions of others, caution must be exercised when using these data. Further research into the attitudes and views of high school students would provide a more thorough understanding of students' perceptions of the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling. A three or four year longitudinal study of the extracurricular involvement of randomly selected high school students could prove especially useful. Since students have been forced to make difficult decisions about their participation in extracurricular activities, investigating their attitudes and feelings throughout their high school years might provide a more encompassing view. Perhaps a study of this nature would assist in our understanding of other topics such as student stress, student drop-outs, and student success.

Students involved in extracurricular activities were concerned with the time constraints placed upon them. Previous research (Gholsan, 1976; Vornberg, 1982; and King & Peart, 1990) identified the issue of part-time employment as an influence on students' choices about extracurricular involvement. Why are so many students choosing to work in lieu of participating in other types of activities? It seems the time required for part-time employment is a substantial component of the students' "time arena." Part-time jobs appear to be actively competing with other factors like academic pursuits, family commitments and peer relationships. A further study on high school students' attitudes on part-time employment may not only contribute to

our understanding of the significance of extracurricular involvement to their schooling but also to our understanding of student stress.

Many grade 10 students involved in this study were apprehensive about becoming involved in extracurricular activities. Students that participated early in their high school careers were previously very active in school-based junior high school activities. In the interviews, most of these students displayed a strong sense of self-confidence and assurance. However, one must take care not to assume that these students were self-confident strictly as a result of their extracurricular involvement in junior high school. Although the study suggested a growth of self-esteem in participants as they progressed through high school, caution must be exercised not to eliminate "the maturity factor." A comparative study of the type, degree, and reasons for involvement in junior high verses grade 10 participation might provide valuable information about what effect entering a new school setting has on self-esteem.

Along with the many questions still unanswered regarding the significance of extracurricular activities for individual students, further research is needed on the roles of these activities in establishing and maintaining a school ethos. Scholars such as Rutter, 1979 ; Lightfoot, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; and King and Peart, 1990 have directed their research toward identifying the facets of "the good high school." Each has proposed that in order for a positive and pleasant school atmosphere to exist in a high school, students, teachers, and administrators must be satisfied with their school. Glanfield (1989) found that extracurricular activities served as both satisfiers and dissatisfiers for students. Dissatisfaction arose from frustrations experienced from the lack of interest and involvement of students and staff. Satisfaction resulted from several factors similar to those identified in this study. For example, meeting more people, travelling, enjoying school, representing their school and playing

sports were identified as satisfiers for high school students. I found that all students believed that extracurricular activities were important to their schools and that extracurricular activities helped create an identity for the school. Further research is warranted in order to gain a more complete understanding of the role extracurricular activities play in developing a school that students are proud of and like to attend.

The attitudes students shared about extracurricular involvement were similar to those advanced in previous studies. Students appreciated the many benefits of extracurricular participation. However, societal pressures experienced by today's high school students have changed. As a result of these pressures, different degrees of participation may be present in modern high schools. As most students regret not being more active in school-based activities, some practical implications for teachers and administrators should be investigated.

Practice

Considering that most of today's students do not have enough time to commit to a demanding extracurricular activity, administrators might be interested in a close examination of findings that reveal a more comprehensive understanding of the reasons for these conflicting demands for time. This would enable administrators to develop a better awareness of the time constraints on today's high school students. With this consciousness, modification of extracurricular programs to meet the needs of these students may be initiated.

King and Peart (1990) suggested a link between positive school cultures and reduced absenteeism and lower drop-out rates. Considering this, and similar inferences from this study, administrators might consider evaluating the

important role that extracurricular activities appear to play in establishing a positive school culture. This becomes more important as one considers the national drop-out rate in Canada. A very recent article in the Edmonton Sun quoted Canada's federal youth minister, Pierre Cadieux:

> Our [Canada's] high school drop-out rate of approximately 30 per cent is one of the highest in the industrial world. ... Taxpayers will shell out $33 billion over the next 20 years to keep high school drop-outs on unemployment insurance and welfare. One student drops out of a Canadian school every 45 seconds over a nine-month school term. (1991, July 7, p. 5)

The task of creating positive school cultures (be it through extracurricular programs or other initiatives) becomes even more difficult when one studies today's financial restraints and funding formulas. Thoughtful decisions must be made when considering collapsing, expanding, or modifying existing extracurricular programs. Administrators must entice students to their schools and retain them once they attend. Perhaps extracurricular programming may be "the carrot."

One final implication arises from the belief that students, in general, appreciate teachers who are willing to give of their own free time in order to supervise students. This appreciation from students leads to a better understanding and a stronger rapport inside and outside the classroom. Administrators should try to be aware of their staff's involvement and more importantly their staff's attitudes about involvement. Perhaps a reevaluation of hiring requirements might need to be considered. In addition, where possible, administrators may want to consider encouraging nonparticipant teachers to work with students in out-of-class activities. In doing so, administrators may promote the building of a culture of caring.

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APPENDIX A

Roles of Extracurricular Programs in Secondary Schools

FACTOR	AUTHORITY													
	King & Peart	Gholson & Buser	Goodlad	Unio. of N.Y.	Sergiovanni	Miller et al.	Gilandfield	Meeds	Rosow	Boyer	Rizzo	Crain	Mauch	Riedway
leads to student satisfaction with their school. Promotes "school spirit"	X		X	X		X	X		X					
encourages socialization and friendships	X	X	X					X				X	X	
promotes teacher/student rapport	X	X		X		X	X	X						X
promotes student success and recognition beyond academics	X	X	X	X			X	X		X			X	X
keeps students in school	X													
student learns to use leisure time and appreciate out of school activities	X	X				X			X		X	X	X	
promotes the development of individual interests		X		X		X		X	X	X	X		X	
increases citizenship in students		X		X		X			X	X	X			
fosters student self-esteem	X		X		X				X			X	X	
affords travel opportunities								X					X	
satisfies gregarious urges of students						X								
develops leadership qualities		X												

APPENDIX B

Class Survey **Grade 10**

It is important to ensure that each student is aware of the definition of extracurricular activities to be used in this study. Please read the following definition before responding to the survey question.

> **Extracurricular activities are defined as those activities that include:competitive school sports; intramural activities; academic extensions like science or debate clubs, music or drama; special assemblies; and social activities such as student associations, yearbook, clubs, or peer support teams.**

After reading the definition, please check the appropriate space for the following:

Considering the above definition, how many school based extracurricular activities are you involved in, or do you intend to become involved in, ***this year***?

None....._____**(1)**

One....._____**(2)**

Two....._____**(3)**

Three or more....._____**(4)**

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX C

April 5/1990

Dear

I am currently enrolled at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Graduate Studies . As part of the graduation requirements for a Master's degree I have chosen to complete a thesis. The purpose of my study is "to gain an understanding of the perceptions of high school students about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling." The study will be limited to two central Alberta High Schools.

In order to draw meaningful conclusions from my study, it is important that I survey a wide sampling of students in the two selected schools. The survey will establish the percentage of students who partake in extracurricular activities as well as differentiate the degree of participation. In addition to the survey, I will be interviewing several students in order to reveal student attitudes. To this end I solicit your support. I am hopeful that the information gathered during this study may be useful in helping to understand roles for extracurricular activities in secondary schools.

There will be approximately 900 surveys distributed to the grade 10 and 12 students of two central Alberta high schools. Your school has been chosen to participate in this study. I have received permission from your superintendent to involve your school.

Enclosed you will find a *brief* questionnaire that should take your students approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your assistance in coordinating the completion of the surveys is most important to the study. It is imperative that a very high proportion of these questionnaires be completed and returned for data analysis.

The study is intended to examine a sample of central Alberta secondary schools and therefore identifying individual schools or

students is not necessary. To this end I would request that students NOT put their name on the survey. This will insure anonymity and confidentiality for both themselves and your school.

Enclosed you will find copies of the questionnaire. Because of the massive costs involved in returning the questionnaires by mail, I have enclosed an envelope in which you can seal the completed documents. I will be personally picking up the questionnaires April 12. If this date is inconvenient, please contact me at either number given below.

One further requirement will be the identification of approximately ten (10) grade 12 and ten (10) grade 10 students who I might approach for consent to be interviewed for my study. The students should be chosen with consideration given to their willingness and ability to communicate; as well as, providing an equal representation of those with several extracurricular commitments to those with no extra class involvement. All students will be informed about the intent of the study and those under the age of 18 will be asked to have a consent form signed by their parents. In addition, each student will be free to opt out of the research at any time.

I am very excited about the prospects of this study and would like to thank you in advance for your anticipated support. At the completion of the study, I would be pleased to provide you with a copy of the results. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to call Dr. Bill Maynes, my research advisor, at 492-3691 or myself at 352-4721(home) or 492-4913(university).

Appreciatively,

Larry Ethier

APPENDIX D

April 5/1991

Dear

I am currently enrolled at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Graduate Studies . As part of the graduation requirements for a Master's degree I have chosen to complete a thesis. The purpose of my study is "to gain an understanding of the perceptions of high school students about the significance of extracurricular activities to their schooling." The study will be limited to two central Alberta High Schools.

In order to draw meaningful conclusions from my study, it is important that I interview several students in order to reveal student attitudes. To this end I solicit your support. Your son/daughter has been recommended by the school to participate in this study. Complete anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed and the participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time. Due to the nature of the research, no sensitive issues will be addressed. I am hopeful that the information gathered during this study may be useful in helping to understand roles for extracurricular activities in secondary schools.

I am very excited about the prospects of this study and would like to thank you in advance for your anticipated support. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to call Dr. Bill Maynes, my research advisor, at 492-3691, or myself at 352-4721(home) or 492-4913 (university).

Appreciatively,

Larry Ethier

I hereby give _____ permission to participate in the above described research.

_____

(parent and/or guardian)

APPENDIX E

Interview protocol

1. What role do extracurricular activities play for you as a student of _____high school?
2. What role do you see extracurricular activities playing for your school?
3. Why have you chosen to (or not to) become involved in extracurricular activities?
4. Why do you think other students become (or don't become) involved in extracurricular activities?
5. How would you feel if your school cancelled all its extracurricular programs?
6. What thoughts come into your mind when you think about the last extracurricular activity you took part in?
7. Do you know what teachers in your school are involved in extracurricular activities? How do you feel about being taught by those teachers as compared to teachers not involved in extracurricular activities?
8. Do you think that students participating in extracurricular activities have better attendance at school? Why or why not?
9. If you had the opportunity to relive your _____ years at high school, would you do anything different regarding your participation in extracurricular activities?